



# THE STUDENT WORLD

A quarterly magazine published at 13 Rue Calvin, Geneva  
by the World's Student Christian Federation

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VOLUME LI

Fourth Quarter, 1958

NUMBER 4

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## Christianity and Ancient Religions

The mission of the Church is directed to all who are outside of it. Our witness to other people is thus based first of all on what people are not rather than on what they are. We begin by thinking of certain friends and neighbours simply as "non-Christians". We have a religious concern for them because of what they do not know and believe about Jesus Christ. It is only when we are actually engaged in the work of evangelizing others that we are confronted by what they do believe, and by the religious structure (or ideology) that has moulded their belief. Then they cease to be for us only non-Christians and become Buddhists, or Moslems, or communists, or something else. At that point the simple confrontation between a Christian and his friend in the presence of Jesus Christ becomes part of a larger and more complex confrontation, for example, between Christianity and Buddhism conditioned by the whole of human history.

From the first, however, the people whom we seek to evangelize have not only the negative character of "non-Christians" but also the positive character of *persons* about whom we care and about whom, we profoundly believe, God cares. It is where positive feelings are most strong, as towards classmates or members of our own family, that the impulse to evangelism is most insistent and our obligation most clear. Can we say, then, that the world's great religions have only a negative

character? That they are only various forms of "non-Christianity", noble failures, elaborate errors, dangerous rivals to the Church? What is positive in our view of Islam or Hinduism or Buddhism? What is God's relationship to these religions and their relationship to that history of which Jesus Christ is Lord? Is there some truth in other religions that is not found in Christianity? Are these religions the friends and neighbours of Christianity — remembering that our unbelieving friends and neighbours are often better people than ourselves — or are they structurally so alien to Christ that they should be attacked, overcome, and supplanted by the Church, in Christ's name.

Just what is the mission of the Church to adherents of other faiths? The question has a new urgency today both because of the revival of the ancient religions themselves, and because of our own uncertainty about the foreign missionary enterprise.

Let us be sure, first of all, that the ancient religions (by which we mean especially Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism) are not dead. They are not simply curiosities for the anthropologist's card-file. The revival of ancient religions is one of the most important and unexpected developments of our day — fully as important as the spread of political ideologies in the place of religion in the West. This revival is linked to the recovery of national independence and to a creative struggle to adapt traditional culture to modern life among the people of Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

Comparative religion has taught us not to underestimate the profundity and subtlety of Eastern religious thought or the loftiness of their ethical ideals. Well and good. But many people, East and West, questioned the relevance to modern life of ancient religions based upon conservative rural custom and pre-scientific metaphysics. As secularism spread, and the various revolutions in economics, politics, technology gathered force, we confidently predicted the final collapse of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam as in any sense living religions. This prophesy proved to be very wrong. The ancient religions, partly in response to the challenge of modern life, show signs of new vitality in every part of the world. There are movements

for the reform and reinterpretation in contemporary terms of the ancient faith, and also movements in the direction of syncretism with Christianity, hoping to harmonize in one way or another the ethics and theologies of both East and West. Not only are people turning back again to the religions of their ancestors, but the claims of these religions receive great support from the new nationalism in Asia and the Middle East. As we know, many of these lands have recovered national independence for the first time in centuries. In an attempt to recover and preserve also their national cultural tradition, adherence to traditional religion has been made a matter of patriotism.

The corollary of this is that Christians find themselves in a difficult position as small minorities, in most cases still heavily dependent on Western money. The support of Christianity or its propagation is regarded as disloyal or even betrayal of one's own people and their national individuality. Christian minorities, once in a favoured position during the colonial era, increasingly feel the pressure of discrimination in business, political life, or in the education of their children. In the lands of the ancient religions we must take full account of the fact that Christianity is very widely identified with the emotional meanings of colonialism and imperialism. In spite of the growth of younger churches and indigenous leadership, the Gospel is still foreign and preached very much in foreign terms. One sign of the revived strength of Hinduism, for example, is the difficulty faced by all foreign missionaries who wish to secure entrance to India. In other countries, as in Ceylon, the continuance of Christian schools is under serious attack by Buddhist majorities. Thus for young Christians, in Asia and the Middle East especially, an understanding of the life and mission of the Church depends very much on their understanding of the relation of Christianity to other religions. For them it is not an academic question. All about them the ancient religions are bursting with new vitality, arming themselves with a new political power, and threaten to drive the Church into ghetto-like isolation.

One might ask what is the importance of the revival of ancient religions to readers in Europe or North America.

A little reflection ought to make it clear that this is not just a matter of foreign news. The problem is central to our understanding of the life and mission of the Church.

In the first place, the revival of the ancient religions includes a successful missionary movement to the West. One of the world's most beautiful Mohammedan mosques, air-conditioned throughout, is now found in Washington D. C. Buddhism already forms a minority large enough to be politically significant in England and the United States. Candidates for public office are eager to be photographed visiting their shrines, and Buddhist leaders are included in interfaith conferences once reserved for Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. Indeed their foreign missionary force is expected to reach a total of two thousand within the next few years. This exceeds the number of Western Christian missionaries now at work in Buddhist countries.

Thus the ancient religions are making good their claim to be truly universal religions, superior in many respects to the shallow sort of Christianity they often encounter. Their missionary success is made possible by our own theological uncertainties and by our failures in evangelism. Western Christians are confronted by the great religions of the East on their own doorstep in a way that has never happened before.

Secondly, wherever discussion of the mission of the Church occurs, one of the first questions asked is usually about the rightness of missions. The question is raised in many forms. For example : "Why should we force our religion on others ?" "What right have I to preach my religion to a man who has his own ?" "How do I know that their religion is not good enough for them ?"

Few Christians question the validity or the urgency of our obligation to bear witness to communists or secular humanists, or to those in any place where there is "religious vacuum". Where men believe in nothing more than themselves we are not embarrassed to seek their conversion to Jesus Christ. Why do so many hesitate when it comes to the question of evangelizing people "who have a religion" other than faith in Christ ? In the West, is this because Christians still think of themselves unconsciously as belonging to Christendom ? Do

they so identify the Christian faith with Western culture that they shrink from missionary activity abroad as a form of cultural imperialism? We ask ourselves whether the missionary enterprise is really an act of aggression, directed to people who already have a religion which we in some way can respect, and which seems suited to their own culture and language, as Western Christianity is not. Is the form of cultural aggression the only form which the mission of the Church can take in the lands of ancient religions? What do we mean when we say the Gospel is universal? Can it be expressed in its fullness in anything but Western terms? Is Western Christianity inevitably the only form of the Gospel Western missionaries can preach? Is it possible to separate what is essential in the Gospel from the cultural dress in which it appears? Even then, could we expect Buddhists, Hindus, and Moslems to become Christians without losing something of great value in their own tradition?

The questions are endless and lead to ever more fundamental questions, about the nature of the Church, the biblical basis for its mission, the relationship of Christianity and culture, and the Christian understanding of the goal of human history.

In this and in the two following issues of *The Student World* we shall try to bring you a series of articles written both from the point of view of Christians in direct contact with the great ethnic religions and also from the point of view of adherents of those religions as they confront Christianity. This issue is principally concerned with Hinduism, with the more general questions of "Christianity and religion", and with the problem of developing an expression of Christian theology that will be truly Asian in character and not only reflect the thought and historical circumstances of the West. The next two issues of *The Student World* will include additional articles on Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism. Two other articles appear here which may seem to be off the main theme. That is so only if you define ancient religions in a traditional way, reserving the term for the "high" religions of Asia and the Middle East. Africa too has come to a new political and cultural self-consciousness. 'Bola Ige reminds us not to underestimate either the vitality or the theological significance of traditional African

faiths. So too in Latin America, one of the world's oldest religious themes, in the modern form of spiritualism, has come to represent an important religious force and problem for Christian evangelism. So much of our attention has been concentrated on the problem of political Roman Catholicism in this area, that it will come as a disturbing shock to readers on other continents to learn how very seriously we must take the issue of spiritualism as well. Moreover this is not simply a Latin American problem, but a world-wide religious phenomenon of concern to Christians everywhere.

The articles in this and other issues of *The Student World* to follow are only an introduction. It is to be hoped therefore that they will inspire you to make a real use of the bibliography prepared by Professor Devanandan. Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism are ancient religions, but still very much alive in renewed forms. The questions they have always posed for Christianity still remain for the most part unanswered.

CHARLES LONG.

## **Christianity and Religion**

ENKICHI KAN

### *The essence of religion*

In Japanese the word religion is translated as *shukyo*, which means literally the teaching of any religious sect. Therefore Christianity is also thought of as one of the religions, and it is translated as *Kirisuto-kyo* which means literally the teaching of Christ, just as the word Buddhism means literally the teaching of Buddha. It is not my intention to discuss whether it is correct to translate the word religion as teaching. I only want to point out the fact that in Japan all religions are almost instinctively understood as belonging to the same species. There is here an underlying presupposition, which may be called a pantheistic way of thinking, that all religions in history are simply various manifestations of one and the same essence of religion. Then it makes no difference which religion you choose, because all will lead you to the same goal. The well-known illustration employed to explain this idea is that of a mountain : there are many roads which you may take but all will lead you to the summit. Then the question naturally arises : which road will you take ? The answer is, of course, the one you prefer, or the one you think the best.

Now if we follow this line of thinking, inevitably we have to face another question : why should we Japanese choose Christianity ? We have so many indigenous religions which will lead us to the same goal equally as well, or perhaps more easily. If any reason is given for choosing Christianity, it may run something like this : Christianity is more adaptable to modern civilization, or it is more rational than other religions in its presentation of faith, etc. But these criteria for choosing Christianity lie not in the domain of religion itself, but

in the domain of civilization or philosophy. Christianity must be evaluated from the standpoint of religion itself, that is to say, it must be seen to be the best manifestation of the essence of religion. But since, according to pantheistic thinking, all religions are in the end one and the same, we cannot make any distinction of good or bad, of better or worse, among them ; they are all equally good manifestations of the same essence of religion. This conclusion results from the fact that oriental thinking lacks the conception of time, or history, the idea of historical development. It does not recognize the reality of time ; time is a mere dream ; it is non-being. Change is mere appearance ; it does not really exist.

It was Hegel who maintained that history is the process through which the Reality, that is, the Absolute Reason or Spirit, unfolds itself. "In this universal process of unfolding of Spirit, the fundamental impulse towards salvation and communion with God overcomes all the limitations of sense experience, of the natural order, of mythological form, until it attains perfect expression in Christianity, and enters into combination with the loftiest and most spiritual of all philosophies...Christianity is not a particular religion, but it is religion."<sup>1</sup> I am not going to discuss Hegel's philosophy of history here, but we do have to acknowledge his great effort to prove the absoluteness of Christianity from the standpoint of the philosophy of history. However, it is no longer possible for us to accept his philosophy of history as he presents it. The idea that history is the stage on which God acts is essentially biblical, but Hegel's dialectic, i.e. the logic of historical progress, is not true to the facts of history. If synthesis is the fuller unfolding of the content of thesis by passing through antithesis, the later stage in time-order is always higher in the scale of value, and history is the process of ever-ascending development. This is a very optimistic way of thinking. But history does not always show a process of evolution ; there has also been devolution. If Hegel's theory of history were true, we would have to say that the new syncretistic religions which are emerging just now in Japan are the highest form of religion.

<sup>1</sup> E. TROELTSCH, *Christian Thought* (London, 1923), p. 10 f.

*The ideal of religion*

It was Ernst Troeltsch, the last and ultimate representative of liberal theology, who, in criticizing Hegel's philosophy of history, tried on the one hand to revise his dialectic, and on the other to prove the absoluteness of Christianity from his own philosophy of history. According to him, "history cannot be regarded as a process in which a universal and everywhere similar principle is confided and obscured. Nor is it a continual mixing and remixing of elemental psychical powers, which indicate a general trend of things towards a rational end or goal of evolution. It is rather an immeasurable, incomprehensible profusion of always-new, unique, and hence individual tendencies, welling up from undiscovered depths, and coming to light in each case in unsuspected places under different circumstances."<sup>1</sup> "The universal law of history consists precisely in this, that the Divine Reason, or the Divine Life, within history, constantly manifests itself in always-new and alwayspeculiar individualizations."<sup>1</sup> This historical individuality was entirely left out in Hegel's thought, but it is exactly the characteristic which makes history really history. Then the history of religions cannot be easily manipulated by a dialectic such as Hegel's. However, Troeltsch maintains that, since they are all called "religions", they must have something in common; this may be said to be the essence of religion as claimed by Hegel, but the word essence must be used in the sense of ideal. All religions have something in common because they are all striving to realize the same ideal of religion.

What is that ideal of religion? It cannot be defined by mere speculative thinking; it must be drawn out of the facts of the history of religions. And Troeltsch says that as we examine the historical facts of various religions as objectively as possible and compare them with each other, we come to an intuition, which is born out of deep personal experience, that this particular religion is the nearest possible realization of the ideal of religion in history. The ideal of religion itself stands beyond history and beckons us, but on this side of history there are only incomplete realizations of the ideal.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

However, we can have the personal conviction that Christianity is the nearest possible realization in history of that ideal. Since it is a personal conviction, of course no absolute proof is possible. Therefore we must admit that others may come to different convictions. However, according to Troeltsch, such personal convictions need not to be rejected as mere subjective truths. "These are not simply illusions nor the products of human vanity. They are products of the impulse towards absolute truth."<sup>1</sup> All religions "are tending in the same direction and they all seem impelled by an inner force to strive upwards to some unknown final height where alone the ultimate unity and the final objective validity can lie"<sup>1</sup>. The claim of absoluteness made by each religion is not its own arbitrary assertion. It is inevitably pressed by the Divine Spirit. If all religions strive to develop their own potentialities, they will come nearer to one another.

Thus far, we have examined two viewpoints which look at Christianity as one of the religions : the first, one which is very popular in Asia ; the second, that of so-called liberal theology. Both presuppose an essence of religion, though differently conceived, which lies beneath all religions. Both are based on some kind of philosophy : the first on pantheism, and the second on a philosophy of history. But we must discuss religion, not as a philosophical, but as a religious problem.

#### *The act and content of revelation*

Emil Brunner discusses the relation of Christianity to non-Christian religions from the standpoint of revelation. He says that all religions claim that they are somehow grounded upon revelation. Gods have no meaning for men other than by self-manifestation. In this sense all religions can be said to be religions of revelation. But what does revelation mean ? In the primitive religions revelation is the same as manifestation, that is, a sort of sensuous self-communication ; it is the real presence of God. In such a manifestation God or God's power is not only really present, but also is directly knowable. And the presence and the knowability of God are one and

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

the same. However, this sensuous self-communication cannot reach beyond a certain place. If we want to meet God, we have to go to that place where he resides. In this kind of revelation nothing is revealed but what happens in that particular place.

But there is another idea of revelation possessed by higher religions. Here revelation is given about something which cannot be perceived by the senses, that is to say, about teaching, law, myth, prophecy, etc. This kind of revelation is also regarded as supernatural, and is distinguished from what man can obtain by his own powers of thought. It is not rational truth, but revealed truth. It is given through an event which breaks through natural happenings. But such a miraculous event is not as important as its revealed content, that is, its teaching. Therefore, we might say that this kind of revelation is essentially indirect. The miraculous happening which accompanies the revelation is simply a means to make the content of the revelation easy to believe. Most of the so-called higher religions which possess Holy Scriptures, such as the Veda or Koran, claim this type of revelation — revealed teaching. Here the act of revelation has no inner connection with the content of revelation, whereas in the primitive religions the act and the content cannot be separated.

### *Revelation in Jesus Christ*

The revelation in Jesus Christ is not of either the first or second kind, but includes in it revelations of both kinds. The revelation in Christ has the element of the real presence, that is, the inseparability of the content of revelation from the miraculous event, as in the primitive religions. God is personally present in his revelation, and his real presence is its important content. In this sense there is a holy place where the miracle happens, and if we want to receive his manifestation and his saving power, we have to go to that place called Jesus Christ. But this manifestation of God through Jesus Christ is not sensuous; therefore, it can only be indirectly knowable, as in the higher religions. The God of Christianity reveals himself through contradiction: his glory is manifested

on the Cross ; his power is strong in weakness. The revelation here is at the same time concealment, because God is God ; consequently he cannot manifest himself sensuously. God was in Christ. God himself was personally there, but in a hidden way, so that "flesh and blood" could not perceive it. Only through the Holy Spirit can faith perceive it even now.

Such is the gist of Brunner's argument as we find it in his pamphlet, *Die Christusbotschaft im Kampf mit den Religionen* (1931). He rejects the idea of the essence of religion, but he starts from the idea that all religions stand on some kind of revelation. However, the revelations of non-Christian religions are incomplete and distorted. They are the split fragments of the truth, but not the whole truth. Christianity is the only religion in which all the split fragments are put together and restored to the original united whole. Such revelation is indeed unique, and cannot be found anywhere else. It is also the judging and reconciling completion of other types of revelation.

### *The work of the Holy Spirit*

This opinion of Brunner on the relation between Christianity and non-Christian religions is ingenious and valuable, but the problem here is whether it is correct to say that all religions are grounded on revelation. Although they may claim revelation, is not the meaning of revelation in non-Christian religions entirely different from its meaning in Christianity ? If the content of the revelation in Christianity is Jesus Christ, this content cannot be understood except by revelation, that is, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Many non-Christian religions claim that they start from some kind of revelation, but what they mean is that the truth they preach is given miraculously by God or gods. Yet when they teach that truth, they can simply appeal to man's own ability and understanding ; they do not need the special work of the Holy Spirit.

I once had an opportunity to discuss with Dr. Daisetsu Suzuki, a well-known Zen Buddhist scholar in Japan. When our discussion reached a climax, he finally asked me the fundamental difference between Christianity and Buddhism. I said

it is the Trinitarian God. And I in turn asked him, "Do you have anything which corresponds to God the Father?" He said, "Yes, we have". Then I asked, "Anything which corresponds to God the Son?" He again answered, "Yes". So lastly I asked him, "Do you have anything which corresponds to the Holy Spirit?" He was silent a little while, and then said, "No". Everyone who has had discussions with Buddhists knows that they always boast that Buddhism is such an inclusive system that it embraces all the truths on earth. But this Buddhist scholar confessed clearly that Buddhism has nothing which corresponds to the Holy Spirit. I think this is an extremely interesting point, for I believe that it is also true of all non-Christian religions.

In Christianity God's revelation happened once through Jesus Christ. But Jesus Christ cannot be understood unless the Holy Spirit works upon us now, that is, unless God's revelation happens to us now. In this sense Christianity can be said to be the only religion of complete revelation. It not only starts from revelation through Jesus Christ, but it must also live by its revelation, that is, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

# The Problem of Indigenization of Christian Theology in Asia

J. R. CHANDRAN

The rather difficult word "indigenization" has been quite commonly used, particularly during this century, in discussions about life, worship, and theology of the Church in Asia. The East Asian Theological Commission on Worship, functioning under the auspices of the World Council of Churches, has as its main subject for study the indigenization of Christian worship. The Church of South India has a committee working on ways of indigenizing the life of the Church. One also hears often the unpleasant charge that the churches in Asia are too much dependent on the West, not only for financial support but also for forms of worship and for theology. Much has been said about the need for, as well as the possible dangers of, developing a Christian theology in India or in other countries in Asia, clearly distinguishable from the theology of Europe or America. Dr. Walter Horton has remarked in his *Christian Theology, An Ecumenical Approach* that "it will be at least another generation before their formal treatises on theology will begin to influence the thought of Christendom at large". Whatever be the time factor involved, it is in the fitness of things that the question of why and how Christian theology may be indigenized is engaging the attention of many concerned with the Church's mission.

## *What is indigenization?*

First it is important to clarify the meaning of indigenization. Often in India it is regarded as synonymous with Indianization or Hinduization. The word "indigenous" literally means born or produced naturally in a country. It is, however, rather

<sup>1</sup> W. M. HORTON, *Christian Theology, An Ecumenical Approach* (Harper, New York, 1955), p. 8.

difficult to see how any Christian theology can naturally belong to a country. I remember an interesting discussion at the Fire-side Fellowship of the Federated Theological Faculty in Chicago on the theological method, in which two views were expressed as antithetical to each other. One view held that all the norms and categories of theology should be derived from the environment. The other view emphasized the absolute objectivity of the theological categories derived from the truth once for all revealed. Now, the first may be mistaken as the basis for indigenous theology. But for a genuinely indigenous Christian theology both principles should be held together, and not in exclusion of each other.

Indigenization is a principle and a process integral to the nature and role of Christian theology. Theology, as Professor Tillich rightly calls it, is a function of the Christian Church, and should fulfil two basic principles: first, the setting forth clearly of the Christian message, once for all revealed, and second, the interpretation of this message in a manner "challengingly relevant" for each generation. It is when a theology holds both these principles together that it is indigenous theology. Otherwise we may have something which is indigenous without being Christian theology, or something which is theology without being relevant. In fact, every Christian theology which has exercised transforming power in the Church and really called people to repentance has held the two principles together. Every Christian theology has taken categories of thought from the situation or the culture to which it addressed itself. Failure to recognize this truth has been largely responsible for the charge of irrelevance. Often categories meaningful for one particular situation, such as the sixteenth-century European controversies, have been applied uncritically to formulate the faith of the Church placed in a totally different situation and faced with a very different task, as in modern India, Indonesia, or Japan. On the other hand, failure to keep clearly in mind the central facts of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, attempting to derive all theological categories from the particular situation, will lead to the obscuring of the distinction between theology and philosophy or human speculation. Theology will cease to be Christian and become little more than a human point of view.

The claim of the Church to be committed to proclaim a revelatory event once for all enacted in Christ may appear to be too authoritarian and exclusive from the point of view of human reason. But apart from this conviction Christian theology has no foundation. As St. Paul says in I Corinthians 1 : 22-24, the Cross and Resurrection of Christ, which seem to be absurd for both the religious man and the philosopher, are really the power of God and the wisdom of God. They have in history provided the greatest source of inspiration for dynamic religious movements, and have the clue to the nature of ultimate reality and human destiny. Attempts to remove the stumbling-block of the particular act of God in Jesus Christ will only land us in further contradictions. For example, Dr. Eddy Asirvatham, in his book, *Christianity in the Indian Crucible*, criticizes the views of Dr. H. Kraemer and Dr. D. T. Niles as dogmatic, and proposes a distinction between the "fact" of revelation which is universal and the "content" of revelation which is the result of particular responses<sup>1</sup>. He seems to claim a certain superiority for the "content" of revelation as grasped by Christians, and therefore accepts the principle of evangelistic enterprise. On these premises the authority for the Christian mission rests on the superiority of a human discovery rather than on faith in a decisive act of God. Christian revelation cannot be adequately described as the discovery of a revelation universally known in all religions and cultures. It is, on the contrary, the acknowledgement of the universal relevance of a particular set of events culminating in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and in the experience of the power of the Holy Spirit in the Church. The Bible is the primary record of this progression of events expressed through myths, prophetic interpretations, apocalyptic visions, and the apostolic preaching.

While recognizing the limitations of all human language and the dependence of human expressions on particular cultures, it is important to define the Christian revelation as comprehensively as possible, so that it may not be mistaken for some aspect of the culture itself. For example, we can agree with Professor

<sup>1</sup> EDDY ASIRVATHAM, *Christianity in the Indian Crucible* (Second Edition, YMCA Publishing House, Calcutta, 1957), p. 32.

Bernard Meland when he says that the Church is the Community within the cultural community, bearing and nurturing the revelation of the historic events<sup>1</sup>. But when he goes on to define the content of the revelation in terms of tenderness and persuasive love, he fails to do justice to the fullness of the revelation. The revelation in Jesus Christ, grasped through the fellowship in the Church which is the Community of the Body of Christ, has brought new insights about the mystery of Being, new insights about man's predicament in the world.

In the acknowledgement of the Person of Christ as the Son of God who died and rose again for our salvation, we have the basis for a doctrine of God and man in which man finds the fulfilment of his being in personal communion with God, who is himself a community of persons. The sacramental life of the Church bears witness to the meeting of the finite and the temporal with the infinite and the eternal and the participation of the creature in the fellowship of the household of God.

### *The relevance of indigenization*

The need for indigenization may be demonstrated in various ways.

(a) No particular formulation of the revelation is adequate for all times and situations. Nor can any one formulation exhaust the full meaning of revelation. To quote Dr. Richard Niebuhr, "One is stopped at one point or another from making the attempt to give a final answer, not only by the evident paucity of one's historical knowledge, as compared with other historical men, and the evident weakness of one's ability in conceptual construction, as compared with other thinkers, but by the conviction, the knowledge, that the giving of such an answer by any finite mind to which any measure of limited and little faith has been granted, would be an act of usurpation of the lordship of Christ which at the same time would involve doing violence to the liberty of Christian men and to the unconcluded history of the Church in culture."<sup>2</sup> The Christian revelation should, therefore, be reinterpreted and reformulated so as to call each generation to repentance and faith.

<sup>1</sup> B. E. MELAND, *Faith and Culture* (Chicago, 1955), pp. 144-145.

<sup>2</sup> RICHARD NIEBUHR, *Christ and Culture* (London, 1952), p. 231.

(b) The once-for-all-ness of the Christian revelation means that its relevance is universal. This claim of universality can become meaningful only if the revelation lends itself for restatement, so that the message comes home to the people with a freshness of challenge demanding response. The restatement should be made both by way of relating the revelation to the particular situation and also of bringing the particular situation under its judgement. A theology which does not make sense to man placed in a particular time and culture cannot be universal.

(c) In the central affirmation of the Christian faith itself, namely that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us in the Person of a concrete historical individual, Jesus Christ, the meaning of indigenization is evident. Indigenization of Christian theology is part of the process of witnessing to the Incarnate Word. Only a theology that takes account of the concrete intellectual, social, and cultural problems of a people can witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

(d) The dialectical relation between creation and redemption, between nature and grace, is an integral part of any interpretation of the Christian faith. This implies that revelation cannot be expressed in a manner ignoring the demands of reason. Reason and revelation also stand in a dialectical relationship to each other. Even though revelation implies a judgement on the limitation of reason, it does not simply negate the claims of reason. Redemption of creation implies that Christian theology should take account of the questions about reality raised in each religion and culture, and should fulfil the twofold task of reformulating its affirmations in the light of these questions and of helping the local culture to reformulate its ultimate questions in the light of the Christian affirmations.

(e) The history of Christian doctrine bears ample testimony to the principle of indigenization. It is the principle underlying St. Paul's missionary strategy of "becoming all things to all men" (I Cor. 9 : 22). As pointed out by Prof. Henry Chadwick in a recent course of lectures, it was St. Paul who first made the transition from Hebraism to Hellenistic Christianity, and he incorporated Hellenistic wisdom theology into Christian doctrine. The whole history of Christian theology, beginning

with St. Paul and up to the present time, can be studied as the history of the creative tension between loyalty to the apostolic faith "once for all delivered" and the equally important loyalty to the mission to communicate that faith challengingly to each generation, taking seriously into consideration the philosophical and cultural problems of that age. Origen, for example, clothed his theology with the categories of Platonism and neo-Platonic mysticism. Aristotelianism provided the categories for Thomas Aquinas. The various doctrines of the work of Christ reflect the political and social structures of the times in which they made their appeal. Modern theologians also, like Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Paul Tillich, have addressed themselves to modern man conditioned by the impact of modern science and various modern philosophies. Only a theology that wrestles with the questions and problems of the age can effectively challenge the people and provide the principles and the power for the transformation of society.

#### *The slow pace of indigenization in Asia*

Even though there have been many movements towards indigenization of Christianity in Asia, the Asian churches still bear too many marks of Western Christianity. This is particularly so in the theology of the Church. The theological training available at most Asian colleges and seminaries is modelled after the theological schools in Europe and America, and the progress made in the production of indigenous theological literature has been slow. If we ask ourselves why this is so, the answer may not be a simple one. Perhaps the historical circumstances of the Christian mission made the Asian churches so dependent on the West. But the slowness of indigenization can also be attributed to the failure to recognize the unity in the theological task of both the objectivity of the Christian message and the principle of relevance of the proclamation or communication. The emphasis has often been primarily on loyalty to the traditional forms of the faith held by some historic denominations in the West, like the Anglicans, the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Baptists, the Holiness Churches and the like. Because of this denominational rigidity, the total effect of the Christian mission has been the transplanting of Western

denominations in a manner alien to the Asian cultures, rather than the carrying of the claims of Christ into Asian cultures and societies.

We should, however, take note of some partial and abortive attempts at indigenization. The experiments of Matteo Ricci in China and Robert de Nobili in India are well known. But they were techniques of evangelism rather than systematic attempts at producing an indigenous theology. We have some examples of indigenous Christian theology in India. One important experiment was that of Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya,<sup>1</sup> who was concerned with the revealing of the Catholic faith in an oriental setting. He produced a system in which he interpreted the relation between Christianity and Hinduism in terms of revealed and natural theology, and replaced Aristotelian categories in the system of St. Thomas by those of the Visishtadvaita of Ramanuja. Among Protestants also there have been some attempts at applying Indian categories like Yoga and Bhakti to Christian theology. The most outstanding names in this effort are those of Bishop A. J. Appasamy, V. Chakkrai, and P. Chenchiah. A brief critical study of their theological works has been published recently by the Gurukul Theological Research Group of the Tamilnad Christian Council<sup>2</sup>. Certainly these experiments have serious defects and misleading tendencies. But still the Asian churches today need more theologians of their type than those of the Gurukul group. Even though the Alexandrian Fathers inspired some heresies which the Church had to fight, their creative thinking contributed much to the influence of Christian thought in the pagan world. In the same way Christian theologians in Asia should have the freedom of experimentation. They should not be too much inhibited by fear of being unorthodox. Weak communication with those outside the Church is as serious a danger to the Church as unorthodoxy.

The greatest check on indigenization has been the inhibition about syncretism in the development of the Christian tradi-

<sup>1</sup> A Bengali convert whose original name was Bhavani Charan Banerji. He was baptised as an Anglican and then became a Roman Catholic. After the Vatican had refused to accept his theological system, he lost interest in the Christian mission and spent his last days as a Hindu.

<sup>2</sup> *A Christian Theological Approach to Hinduism* (C.L.S., Madras, 1956).

tions. Dr. H. Kraemer has a valuable discussion of the problems of syncretism in his book on *Religion and the Christian Faith*<sup>1</sup>. While warning against the dangers of syncretism, he regards *adaptation* as necessary and imperative. There are obviously right and wrong ways of interpreting the Christian faith in a world dominated by non-Christian philosophies and cultures. Adaptation of the Christian message has taken place wherever there was a genuine concern to communicate the Gospel effectively. This leads to a wrong syncretism only where the philosophy with which the Gospel is yoked is in essential conflict with the Christian revelation. For example, even Brahmabandhav rejected Sankara's Advaita as a framework for Christian theology. But where the philosophical questions, myths, forms of worship and the like taken from a local culture are brought under the judgement of the Christian revelation and are used to bring out the truth of God's redemptive act in Christ, we have a process, by whatever name you call it, necessary for Christian theology. The clue to remember, however, is whether the adaptation to local categories makes the Christian faith yield to or resist the invitation to become a sub-culture. In a Hindu environment, where the Vedanta seeks to absorb all religions into itself as different stages of the movement of the spirit towards ultimate mystical union, Christian theology should be particularly aware of the dangers of wrong syncretism.

### *Principles of indigenization*

Indigenization is not to be something peculiar to Asian Christianity. It is a process necessary for the Church's witness everywhere. Genuine indigenization takes place whenever and wherever the Church is alive to her mission of proclaiming the Gospel in the contemporary language of the people. It is not a technique for evangelism but a necessary witness to the Incarnation of the Word of God.

In order to be able to use a people's language with power, we should have a positive appraisal of their religion and culture. The way to look at non-Christian cultures is not as rigid, static

<sup>1</sup> H. KRAEMER, *Religion and the Christian Faith* (Lutterworth, London, 1956), Chs. 24 and 25.

structures or systems which can easily be compared to other cultures in terms of fixed norms. All great cultures have a dynamic dialectical relationship with the convictions of the people about things of ultimate concern. In order to penetrate such a culture with the claims of the Christian Gospel, we have to get into the dialogue that is implicit in it, and carry the dialogue forward to the dialectic of the question of Jesus Christ : "Whom do you say that I am ?"

In this dynamic engagement with the dialectics within cultures, we are to take account of the metaphysical questions raised, the myths expressing their religious faith, their cultus and ethics. For example, the Advaita concern for absolute transcendence of the Brahman, and the Buddhist scepticism about the natural continuance of the self, can both have significance in a Christian dialogue. Similarly, the Saivite teaching on Gurus and theophanies, and the Vaishnavite teaching on Avatars, are relevant for the proclamation of the truth about Jesus Christ. Other examples can be taken up from the myths and festivals which have a great hold on the lives of the people.

It is, however, important to distinguish between the dialectics of indigenization and a kind of fancy-dressing of Christian theology with non-Christian terminology taken from classical forms of religions. A genuinely indigenous theology will address itself to the contemporary situation. In Asia, today, traditional religions are being reinterpreted in order to provide answers for the questions posed by the rapid social changes taking place in the region. The problems of nation building, the struggle for democracy, the fight against colonialism and communism call for a dynamic humanism. Undergirding the resources for humanism found in the modern reinterpretations of the Asian religions, in the Sarvodaya and Bhoodan movements and in secular humanism, as well as subjecting them to the judgement of Christian insights about man, society and the Church are necessary principles for the indigenization of theology. Indigenization so understood will remove the offensiveness belonging to the limitations of human language, but at the same time it will sharpen the offence which belongs to the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and his claims to Lordship over the Church and the world.

# Hinduism and its Attitude to Christianity

P. SANKARANARAYANAN

There are some fundamental facts about Hinduism which must be clearly grasped. In the first place, the name "Hinduism" itself is a misnomer. It is more properly called the "Vedic religion" or "Sanātana Dharma". Unlike other religions, which are named after their founders, the religion of Hindus is named after its scripture, namely, the Vedas. Hinduism is not a founded religion and its scripture is believed to have no human authorship. Anterior to the scriptures of all other religions, the Vedas are declarations of eternal truths. Truth exists by itself and in its own right independent of human utterance. There is no temporal beginning for Truth. Nor does Truth ever cease to be. Being embodiments of Truth, the Vedas have no beginning and can have no end in time. Hence, they are called *anādi* (without beginning) and *ananta* (without end). From this point of view, the Vedic religion is eternal, *sanātana*.

This invests Hinduism with an impersonal character which is the source of its greatest strength. It avoids the danger of loyalty to a person taking the place of loyalty to the truths that he teaches. Personal allegiances promote divisions among men and militate against universality. We are all one in our devotion to impersonal Truth; but we walk into different camps when we label ourselves by the prophets who spoke those truths. Hinduism has no prophet as other religions have. Its sages and saints are only examples of the Vedic Way and of the Vedantic Vision. They verified the eternal verities in their lives and vindicated their validity. Not one of the succession of great teachers of the Hindu faith ever claimed to promulgate a new religion of his own. But every one of them traced his teachings to the primordial source of the Vedas.

## *The tenets of Hinduism*

According to Hinduism, men are divided into two groups, the *āstikās* and the *nāstikās*. The *āstikās* affirm certain things which are fundamental to Hinduism while the *nāstikās* deny

them. Those who say "it is" (*asti*) are *āstikās*; those who say "it is not" (*nāsti*) are *nāstikās*. The *āstikās* affirm that five things exist and are true: 1. the Vedas; 2. God; 3. the *ātman* or the innermost lustrous part of each living being; 4. a future life (as there have been lives in the past), and 5. the operation of the principle of Karma. The *nāstikās* deny either all five of these, or some of them. Every Hindu believes in them all, and orders his life in accord with that belief.

Like the Vedas, God, according to the Hindus, is universal in form and character. It is wrong to say that Hindus are polytheists. Before anyone spoke the language of monism or of monotheism, the Vedas declared: that which exists is One, the wise speak of it variously. The Hindus believe that the One God, with whom no name or form can be associated, can be conceived in any form and can be called by any name. He can be comprehended and worshipped in various ways according to individual capacities and predilections. When Hindus worship different deities, they are aware that they are all manifestations of One God. That is why they retain to this day their corporate character as Hindus, despite the prolixity of denominational groups devoted to different manifestations of the Supreme. That is also why, as we shall see below, it is possible for the Hindus to adopt a fraternal attitude to followers of other religions as fellow pilgrims in the same spiritual quest.

### *The transcendence of finitude*

Religion connates a process of re-union: *re*, again, and *ligare* to bind. It relates to the endeavour to bind again what has been sundered. The entire cosmos, made up of all that is living and lifeless, is the one vast Infinite. Due to a cause which it is neither possible nor necessary to go into, man has separated himself from that Infinite Whole and conceives himself as finite by that separation. Religion is the expression of the endeavour of the finite to restore itself to the Infinite. In essence, man is the Infinite. The Infinite which, by definition, is unlimited, is universal and comprehends everything in its being. Anything apart from it and outside it will detract

from its Infiniteness. Man wrongly thinks that he is not of the Infinite. The office of religion is to restore to man this consciousness of his own Infinitude. Finitude, real or fancied, makes for the woes of life. Transcendence of finitude is synonymous with liberation from bondage. Hinduism prescribes the ways of effecting this transcendence by the triple paths of knowledge, devotion, and dedicated work. The last of these cleanses the mind and directs it to God. Devotion involves God's grace by which the devotee obtains the enlightenment about his true nature which brings about that transcendence.

### *The law of Karma*

Hinduism realizes that this transcendence cannot be effected, for the generality of men, at once within the span of this life. The impediments to it in the form of mental propensities are great, and they have been accumulated through a number of lives in the past. This belief in a series of lives previous to the present, and in the operation of the law of Karma which is the psychical version of the physical law of causation, is cardinal to Hinduism. "Our deeds follow us from afar and what we have been makes us what we are." No other principle can explain the inequalities in the fortunes of men and solve the problem of "unmerited" (?) suffering. To attribute the responsibility to God would be to associate partiality or ignorance with him. The present life vouchsafed to us is to be utilized to wipe out completely or in part, according to our capacities and endeavours, the residual effects of previous actions making for present bondage, and to give a carry-over value to the merit that we acquire in the present life.

It is necessary in this context to remove the impression that the doctrine of Karma involves a fatalistic view of life and takes away from the concept of human freedom. While, in a sense, Karma is inexorable in its operation, it can be annulled upon the dawn of knowledge or by the flow of Divine Grace. It is possible for man to acquire this knowledge and grace by a way of life in which the binding effects of Karma are negated by sublimating it to a higher purpose and without attachment to its fruits. The present is no doubt determined

by our past, but we can determine our future. This consciousness that whatever we do, of good or evil, will come back to us, discovering us through any number of births, is the most potent determinant of a moral life.

### *Progress towards Infinitude*

It is thought that Hinduism is pessimistic in its outlook on life, as it speaks of the sorrows of *samsara* and the way of escape from them. This charge applies equally to all religions which hold out a heaven to which every man is told to aspire. The Hindu view of the state of liberation is that it is one of complete bliss without the possibility of coming back to an embodied existence. The finitized *ātman* throws off its blinkers, realizes its true nature as the Infinite, and is no more afflicted by the limitations of its erstwhile finitude. Hinduism is optimistic enough to assure every man that this state of unalloyed and eternal bliss is within his reach, will he but strive for it in ways prescribed by scripture and perfected in the lives of sages and saints. At the same time, it affirms that this world is the vale of soul-making, and that this life is the opportunity which is to be utilized for securing his own perfection and for promoting the public weal. The spiritual progress of a person is measured in terms of his universal outlook and his capacity to look on all men as himself. The more a man approximates to the consciousness of his Infinitude, the more universal will be his outlook. The perfect sage who has attained liberation even in the present life, the *Jivanmukta* as he is called, is no more confined to his ego sense : he is in tune with the whole world. Autonomous as he is, being a law unto himself, he performs acts of public good from an inner compulsion which is the truest freedom. Morality, which is a normative ideal for other persons, becomes a normal activity to him, and his life becomes the pattern of goodness as it is the embodiment of holiness. He loves his neighbour as himself for the very excellent reason that, in the ultimate analysis, his neighbour is truly himself though, due to superficial trappings of finitude, he may appear to be different. Having "the knowledge of God", he is always "awake to righteousness and sins not".

He "loves the Lord his God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind", for he sees God in all things and all things in God. To him love of God is synonymous with love of fellow men.

### *Religion is one*

The attitude of the Hindu to Christianity is based on the view of universal religion. This is not to be understood as *one* religion for all of humanity, for this is not possible even if it were necessary, and it is not necessary even if it were possible. Men of the world are diversely constituted by reason of their racial differences. The Hindu appreciates that all religions are methods of attaining spiritual perfection ; he may not agree with their underlying philosophy or theology, but he does not quarrel so long as they are satisfactory to their respective followers. He realizes that, during the centuries of its existence, every religion has given birth to sages and saints, men who have "walked with God", great mystics who have had soul-sight of the Supreme. The rituals of various religions may differ, but their hymnology has a common import. The substance of prayer is the same in all religions. Priests may confine the adherents of different faiths in exclusive camps, but the mystics of all religions, speaking the same language as their experiences are identical, bring them together. Sri Ramakrishna, the saint of Dakshinesvar, verified every religion by his own personal achievement and proved that each is a different path to the same goal.

Religion is one though religions are many. And they must be many to provide for congenital differences in men. There are bound to be differences in approach, but the final attainment is the same. This view is fundamental to Hinduism. That is why within Hinduism itself there can be and actually are various schools and sects. By the same token, the Hindu has great respect for Christianity, as he has for Islam or any other religion, so long as each is confined to its sphere and does not make inroads into a sphere which does not belong to it. The fact that every religion extant in the world flourishes in India without let or hindrance is proof of this universality

of Hinduism and of the hospitality of the Hindu. The Hindu appreciates that each religion is adequate for its followers, and does not countenance any person giving up the religion in which he is born.

### *The Hindu view of conversion*

The Hindu has great respect for Christ and his teachings. He sees in Christ, not the son of God, but God himself, for Sri Krishna told him in the *Gita* that whatever has spiritual super-excellence is part of himself. Christ is in the line of such super-excellent manifestations of God. But saying this does not mean that the Hindu is prepared to change his faith for that of the Christians or would countenance attempts to make him do so. On the premise of universality as defined above, he does not see any need to change his religion for that of another, and, what is more, he feels that such a change would be against the spiritual grain imbedded in him through many lives.

The Hindu is unable to understand the Christian who claims absolute superiority for his religion and who, at the worst and in disregard of social decencies, derides and ridicules the Hindu religion, its tenets, and its practices. And when, as a missionary, the Christian proceeds to induce — and, not infrequently, to seduce — Hindus to become converts to Christianity, he feels irritated. He has no objection to the Christian explaining the tenets of his religion to those who ask to be instructed in them. But he does not agree to the message of the Church being substituted for the message of Christ. Commercial ethics prohibit the decrival of similar products of a rival firm, while they do not forbid trumpeting one's own products. The Hindu cannot understand why a different code should be observed in the realm of religion.

The Hindu is, however, sincerely appreciative of the many acts of humanitarian service that Christians have done and are doing in the fields of medical relief and education. But he would be happier still if he had no cause to feel that the motive behind these acts of public benefit is not solely humanitarian, but that they are prompted by the desire to extend the sway of the Christian Church. The Hindus have many

friends among Christians whom they love and revere. They like the Christian, but not the converting missionary. The Hindus do not object, for they cannot, to one of their number becoming a Christian of his own accord, though they do regret that he does so, for one who does not have it in him to be a good Hindu cannot do better as a Christian. This is equally true of a Christian wishing to change his religion for any other. But they cannot bring themselves to believe the assertion of the missionary when he says: "I carry Christianity to the Hindu; he appreciates it and wants to be converted; then the Church steps in and embraces him." The way Christianity is *carried* to the Hindu is itself a matter for dispute, for the Hindu wonders why Christianity should be *thus* carried to others, and why every man should not be left in undisturbed allegiance to his own faith. That Christ is the only true incarnation, that his Gospel is the only truth, that every man is a sinner who should be saved by the Church, that every Christian has a pious duty to preach the Gospel to others: these are statements to which the Hindu cannot subscribe and remain consistent with his own faith and the universality that it connotes.

#### *Many paths to the hilltop*

After all, the God of all religions must be the same. Otherwise, he would not be God and they would not be religions. The claim of the several religions to be able to effect the reunion of man with God has been proved in the persons of the great saints in them, all of whom have had an identical experience of that reunion. There can be many paths to the hilltop. Upon reaching the hilltop, upon the realization of the Universal that is God, the particulars of the different faiths vanish into their fulfilment. Once on the hilltop, every pilgrim sheds his credal vestures and the noise of the texts and the voice of the preacher are hushed in the transforming silence of the common communion with that inclusive unity which is the God of all religions. Why then should we engage ourselves in mutual dispute and waste our energies over the way that we should tread to reach the hilltop: this is the question which every Hindu earnestly puts to his Christian brother.

## **Christian Witness among Hindu Students**

**J. GUY BOOKLESS and C. I. ITTY**

"The hope of the world today lies in the religions of the East, and especially in Hinduism, the most spiritual and most tolerant of all religions. The West has already lost her sense of values, and sold herself to materialism and warmongering." This claim, though it may not always be expressed in these terms, is one that is frequently made in India today; and the outlook that lies behind it is widespread, especially among young Hindus, appealing as it does both to piety and to national pride. We will not stop to examine this claim in detail, but two observations may be made. First, Christian students, constituting as they usually do only a small minority of the student body in a college, are not going to find it easy to bear witness to their faith in an atmosphere where such an outlook is prevalent, and where it is, moreover, often assumed that Christianity in India is heavily dependent on the West. And second, there is at least one point about this claim which should make a Christian pause and consider: when the Hindu, be he a student or an older person, makes the claim that Hinduism is the most truly "spiritual" of all religions, how does he support that claim — and what can a Christian say in reply?

When a Hindu says that God, or a divine power, is at work everywhere in the world, and that every work of God is good and worthy of reverence, the Christian is bound to agree; but when the Hindu goes on to say that, since everything that takes place in the world of nature and in human life is in some sense a "work of God", it is therefore impossible to limit or to describe the operation of so vast a divine power, and it is better to accept the fact that human beings will recognize and worship it under an infinite variety of names and forms, all of which must be adjudged equally legitimate and "true" — at that point the Hindu and the Christian part company. If the Christian then insists that God has limited

himself to one unique revelation of himself in a human life, the Hindu will not usually be impressed, but will most likely go on his way declaring that these intolerant Christians have a very limited and "unspiritual" idea of God, and should not seek to impose their own predilection for one particular saviour or "avatar" upon others.

Stated in that way, the task of Christian witness among Hindu students might seem to be hopeless; but there are other sides to the picture. In the first place, not all Hindu students, by any means, have a clear grasp of their own faith; on the contrary, many will admit that they have given up believing what their fathers used to believe, and will in fact show considerable open-mindedness towards the Christian message — even though they may seldom feel able to cut loose from the old ties and accept Christian baptism. And further, the method of argument, in which each side tries to score points off the other, to press home its claims and to ward off the opponent's, is never the best method for religious communication; in the Hindu-Christian encounter, it has the additional disadvantage that the two religions tend to use the same terms, while giving widely different meanings to them. What then are the ways in which Christians seek, and have sought, to make known the Gospel of Christ among Hindu college students?

### *The witness of Christian colleges*

First let us think of the Christian colleges. Since the days of Alexander Duff and William Carey, large numbers of Hindu students have been attracted by the facilities offered by these colleges for securing a Western type of education; attracted, in many cases, not only by the new intellectual horizons, or by the possibilities of remunerative jobs to follow, but also by the ethos of the college, and by the emphasis on character and on moral and spiritual values. It would not be true, however, to say that these colleges, by and large, have brought any large numbers of converts into the Church. Some would say that that is not, in any case, the main purpose of a Christian college, and that, especially in the India of today, Christian

colleges can only expect recognition and encouragement from a secular government if they make their contribution as centres of sound teaching, discipline, and character-formation, with their Christian witness implicit and diffused, rather than concentrated into all-out evangelistic drives. None the less it must be said that, during the century and a half since the first Christian colleges started, their influence upon Hindu thought has been tremendous, and many Hindus will testify that it was through the impact made upon them in a Christian college that they first began their own search for spiritual foundations — a search which finally led them, in most cases, to a fresh appreciation, and often a reinterpretation, of the Gita or the Vedas.

#### *Witness through student hostels and centres, and worship*

What of the witness of the churches among students apart from the Christian colleges, and excluding for the moment the witness of the SCM? The churches have established hostels for students in many non-Christian colleges, and here again it must be said that the over-all influence of such Christian hostels has been very great, but that not many Hindu students have become Christians as a result of their residence there. In recent years, churches in a number of places have established student centres, where students of all faiths can come in their free time either to read or study, or to join in some program of study groups, recreation, or social work, and where opportunities are provided for learning about the Christian faith. These have proved their value as a means of making fruitful contacts with Hindu and Muslim students, and indeed seem to be the most hopeful avenue for student work open to the churches at the moment. Again, in some places a number of Hindu students regularly attend church services, and express appreciation for the quietness and reverence of Christian worship — corporate worship of this type being something unknown in Hinduism. It might be thought that the days are now passed when Hindus would come and listen to a Christian preacher, in the way that many used to listen to Sherwood Eddy or Stanley Jones, yet the large numbers of non-Christian students

who turned out to hear Billy Graham in Madras in 1955 would seem to contradict this, while others have reported that, when occasionally arrangements are made in a non-Christian college for a speaker to address students on a specifically Christian theme, the response is often beyond all expectation.

### *The witness of SCM Unions*

Within its five-point program, the SCM in India gives an honoured place to evangelism, and the leaders of the Movement try hard to see that it is in fact honoured in the program of SCM Unions. Probably it should be said that the South Indian Unions are more active than most of those in the North in evangelistic activity, and indeed there is, in most places in South India, less of a "minority complex" in the Christian Church as a whole, and less of a feeling that any overt acts of witness may provoke opposition and make things difficult for those concerned. In the particular North Indian SCM Union which one of the writers knows best, there is an annual Week of Witness held, in which students visit patients in hospital, distribute tracts and Gospels, and try to find opportunities for social work. But too many students tend to feel, "Now we've done our duty and 'shown the flag', we can sit back and take things easy for the rest of the year." They may perhaps stage a Christmas drama or broadcast some carols at Christmas and Easter, or sponsor a film with a Christian message in a local cinema, but these things are hardly likely to be fruitful acts of witness by themselves; they must be accompanied by a continuous effort to help non-Christian friends who are prepared to listen to the Christian message.

In defining the task of the SCM in Indian colleges, it is sometimes said that it has two sides, one of nurturing Christian students, and the other of witnessing to others. That definition is useful only if the two are kept very closely together, for Christian life not only needs "nurturing" as a preparation for witness, but actually finds itself growing and being strengthened as it begins to share its riches with others. There is always a danger, and members of Indian SCM Unions are not free from it, that the corporate life of Christians will

develop in an introverted direction, rejoicing like the psalmist in "the house of the Lord" and keeping as far as possible from "the tents of the ungodly". Yet the SCM Union can play a great part in enabling the Christian student to bear his witness ; it can help him, through corporate Bible study and discussions, to understand his faith better, both in the realm of intellect and experience, and it can also impress upon him three things which he is otherwise liable to forget : that bearing witness to one's faith is a *necessary* part of the Christian life — a fact which he may not find illustrated by the example of many older Christians ; that it is a *legitimate* activity, even in a secular state — though many Hindus may not recognize it as such ; and that it is something which is *possible*, and indeed the will of God, for the person he knows himself to be, so that he is not silenced at the outset by the popular cliché, "It's the life that counts — words don't matter". When a student is clear in his mind about these three things, he may then be ready to pray for the conversion of others, and to take his own part in the witness of his Union.

### *Witness through Christian lives*

When the Hindu student is confronted with the Christian message, either through some Christian student friend, or the witness of the SCM Union as such, or perhaps through contact with some other Christians, what are the things which are likely to impress him, and to persuade him to give serious consideration to the claims of Christ ? Not, as we suggested earlier, the "dogmatic" approach, for dogma as such is suspect in the eyes of many modern Hindus ; more likely it will be the total impression made upon him by the story of Christ, and by the way he sees that story reflected in the lives and characters of Christians. Christ died for sins ; very well ; does the life of his Christian fellow student suggest that Christians take really seriously the question of moral obligation before God, that they possess some inner power to help them against temptation, and that they are deeply conscious of their debt to Christ ? The God in whom Christians believe is spoken of in personal terms, especially in terms of love, and he is said

to have revealed himself fully in a human life ; does the life of the Christians he meets in college show, in any marked degree, a greater concern and love for their fellow men, or any deeper understanding of the problems of personal life ? The Hindu may see Christians busying themselves with Christian activity of some kind from time to time, but does their life as a whole show any greater sense of direction and purpose than the lives of those around them ? If the Hindu can find an affirmative answer to such questions, the Gospel story will take on a new interest for him ; he will begin to realize why Christians make their "intolerant" claim on behalf of Christ, since this is evidently "a faith that works".

If this is so, and if it is mainly on the evidence of the lives of the Christian students and others he meets that the Hindu student is going to base his estimate of the Christian faith — and even of Christ himself — how great a responsibility rests upon all of us, whether our work lies in a Christian college, or in work carried out through the SCM or by the churches among students, to see that we ourselves and the Christian students we are in touch with faithfully represent the Master we claim to serve ! For when all possible evangelistic techniques have been tried, as they must be tried, it is in the meeting between one person and another that Christian witness among Hindu students most effectively takes place.

# The Significance of Spiritualism in Latin America

TH. HENRIQUE MAURER, Jr.

Despite the title of this article, I must state at the outset that the remarks which I shall make apply to Brazil, the country about which I am best informed as regards this topic, although I assume that much that is true of my country applies also to the rest of Latin America.

Brazilian Spiritualism is a religious and philosophical system which stands in rather clear opposition to Catholicism and Protestantism. At this point it is different from Anglo-Saxon Spiritualism, which is often distinguished mainly by the belief in a real communication between the living and the dead. According to Conan Doyle, who wrote a history of this movement, English Spiritualism is divided into two parts, one of which remains within the churches, while the other is organized and constituted outside. However, not even the latter comprises all doctrines that are met in Brazilian Spiritualism, which has its source in Allan Kardec's teaching. His system, which arose just a century ago in France, is briefly comprehended in the following fundamental points of doctrine :

- 1) God is personal, eternal, just, and good.
- 2) The universe is created by God.
- 3) The world of spirits existed previous to the material world, and will survive it.
- 4) The spirits progress through numerous reincarnations in human bodies. These happen either as a means of expiation or in order that a mission may be carried out. Through them the general progress of the spirits towards God, who created them, occurs.
- 5) The spirits are constantly and normally in contact with men through mediums who serve as instruments of communication.
- 6) The highest duty of man is the cultivation of charity, which is not only humanity's highest moral ideal, but also

the means whereby he attains salvation. "Without charity no salvation."

7) Jesus Christ, who was "filled with the divine spirit", established the pattern of moral perfection to which humanity may aspire here on earth. God offers him as the perfect model and the supreme teacher for men. His teaching is the purest expression of God's law.

8) Spiritualism is a third revelation which has come to fulfil, to complete, and to clarify the teaching of Christ. It is "the new science which has come with irrefutable proofs to reveal to men the existence and the nature of the spiritual world".

Naturally not all Spiritualists would subscribe fully to this Kardecan creed. Not seldom, oriental influences lead some of them to a more pantheist idea of Spiritualism, while others bring to their new faith identifiable elements of their Catholic or Protestant heritage, often at the point of the divine nature of Christ and his saving mission. Some peculiar sects exist, and among them we note especially the one called Umbanda. Umbanda is characterized by a combination of African and indigenous religious traditions, and claims to be the religion of the "Old Negroes", and the "Caboclos de Aruanda", whose light-giving spirits come to teach us the true way of life. Naturally, as its name indicates, this sect deals with the disembodied spirits of persons representative of the two races mentioned above. These doctrines of Umbanda, which have achieved great popularity among certain groups, reflect the same general tendencies already noted: emphasis on communication with the dead, reincarnation, and the divine goodness, but the movement has a much larger ecclesiastical organization and hierarchy, and has developed a complicated symbolic ritual, with sacraments, etc.

The progress of Spiritualism has been notable everywhere, but perhaps nowhere more than in Brazil. This country, which has proved to be a fertile field for Protestant missions, has also evidenced an amazing growth of Spiritualism. The number of converts is very large, and its influence is being constantly extended through the agency of numerous charitable institutions, and through its very active proselytizing press, which

disseminates throughout the country newspapers, magazines, and books of both doctrine and fiction.

Through these channels the basic tenets of Spiritualism, such as communication with the dead and reincarnation, are made known, as well as those ideas about charity, tolerance, and human brotherhood which are given such a high place. This literature reaches a large reading public among all social classes. New followers may be drawn from among atheists who are impressed by the phenomena of the sessions and decide to renounce their materialism, but also on a large scale from among Catholics, and even in some degree from among Protestants.

One cannot deny that Spiritualism has a powerful attraction for a significant part of the Brazilian people. This undeniable interest is due equally to the natural bent and spiritual need of the people and to the major doctrinal and ethical emphasis of Spiritualism. Let us examine briefly some of the characteristic points which may help to explain the progress to which we have referred.

1) *The inadequacy of the religious and spiritual nourishment offered by the dominant church to a people by nature religiously inclined.* Not only the lack of priests, which is so great that a large proportion of the population is uncared for, but also the excessive materialism of the worship, in which there is little participation by the individual, tend to keep the people in a state of chronic religious malnutrition, and make them an easy prey to new doctrines.

2) *Modern scientific culture, frequently combined with materialistic positivism, which is incapable of providing security and spiritual peace.* For many victims of unbelief and the denial of spiritual values, desperate in a world without love and without a soul, the claims of Spiritualism appear to be a veritable "life-saver", which restore to them a world which the scepticism of the age had stolen away. While in other countries the study of spiritual phenomena may often have brought many doubters back to the church, in my country most sceptics who have been impressed by these studies have adopted the creed of the Spiritualists.

*3) The popular taste for the supernatural and the miraculous.*

This is probably the most important of the factors here mentioned. Such an interest in the supernatural is typical not only of Brazil ; it is often very strong in some of the most culturally advanced countries of the world. However, it is natural that it should be stronger yet among people of a lower cultural level, much closer to primitive traditions, as is the case with many of our people. Superstition and belief in magic are common, and keep alive the idea of a world full of mysterious and supernatural forces.

Thus, while the churches generally offer services of worship in which the dominant spiritual element is intellectual, Spiritualist sessions afford abundant manifestation of a "supernatural" world that serves to satisfy this popular thirst for the miraculous, the unexplainable, and the magical. And so thaumaturgy, which is not unknown in other countries, including France, the birthplace of Kardeccian Spiritualism, takes a prominent place among the reasons for the attractiveness of this religious system to a people always drawn to magic formulas, faith cures, etc.

*4) The intransigent dogmatism of the Roman Catholic Church and of many Protestant churches.* Especially in Protestantism, which has generally been characterized by extreme fundamentalism, this has been the cause of constant losses to Spiritualism. I shall cite only a few examples from Protestantism. The rejection of such dogmas as the eternal damnation of non-believers, and the infallibility of the Bible even in matters of science and history, or even the mere acceptance of the theory of evolution in biology, have all been, and in many cases still are, considered as incompatible with the Christian faith, and anyone who holds such views is liable to veritable spiritual ostracism. This means that people who have little or no idea of the renewal through which Protestantism has passed in this last century, and whose consciences do not permit them to accept the traditional ecclesiastical dogmas, think that they can no longer be Protestants. Thus some of those who wish to hold on to the treasure of a spiritual heritage seek out Spiritualism, where they feel themselves relieved of a yoke of dogma that had become unbearable. This creed appeals to

such people as liberal, tolerant, enlightened, and scientific, showing due respect for doctrinal questionings, and thus serving as a refuge for many who are tired of a dogmatism which, although it does not belong to the essence of Protestantism, has yet frequently characterized and impoverished it.

It is true that Spiritualism does not have the scientific standing to which it lays claim. Its exegesis of the Bible is popular and extremely superficial. Even though it may reject the theory of the literal inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, its study of Holy Scripture does not come to grips with either the results of modern criticism or the principles of impartial hermeneutics. It makes exegesis the servant of dogma at least as much, if not more, than do many Evangelical sects. A sufficient proof of this is that the New Testament references to the new birth, especially those in the dialogue between Jesus and Nicodemus, are universally interpreted by Spiritualist teachers as affirmations of the necessity for reincarnation, in spite of the clearly figurative sense that they have in the text. The expression "Moses and the prophets" in Luke 16 refers to the mediums, according to one Spiritualist commentator on the parables of Jesus. Such exegesis, without any notion of history, or of the original meaning of the saying, or of its context, is extremely common.

Also, when Spiritualism takes up a question related to doctrines that are precious to it, and related as well to modern scientific teaching, we note very frequently a tendency to pass beyond that which is scientifically established, as, for example, when it proclaims that science confirms the existence of living beings on other planets, when, in fact, nothing of the sort has been demonstrated scientifically, except perhaps in regard to some rudimentary forms of life on Mars. As it happens, however, the habitability of the planets is affirmed by the "spirits" which appear in the sessions, and is an important point in their doctrine.

Naturally enough, neither the vulgar and unscientific character of Spiritualist exegesis, nor its use of so-called facts supported by a half-baked science in the interests of dogmas such as reincarnation, really do any harm to this religious movement among the common people, who often clearly prefer the daring

and imaginative flights of such pseudo-scientific literature to the rigorously tested conclusions of true science. Yet do we not see that even among Protestants much literature that is spiritually and scientifically inferior meets with a readier response than serious and profound studies which are scrupulous in their faithfulness to truth?

5) *There is no doubt much that is noble and humane in the moral and religious teaching of Spiritualism*, above all in the emphasis given to charity as the highest virtue to which a man may aspire, and in its spirit of tolerance towards other religious manifestations. Here it expresses one of the tendencies of our age which most deserves our praise. Even though the Spiritualist idea of charity may often contain a good deal that is formal and even mercantile, owing to its emphasis on charity as a means of salvation, it has inspired many generous works of aid and succour to the needy, giving rise to great popular interest in this type of work and of course in the religious system that has brought it about. We can only lament that in contrast to the high value given to charity by Spiritualism, Protestantism has not taken seriously enough the words of Christ and Paul about love. In Brazil the impression is often given that we who are Evangelicals are "champions of faith" rather than of love, while the apostle Paul, who was so great a defender of "justification by faith without the works of the law", explicitly sets forth the supremacy of love, declaring that even though he might have the most powerful faith, without love he would be nothing.

We must draw to a close. That which has been said will give an adequate idea of the reasons for the wide success of Spiritualism in my country. As to its moral and spiritual contribution, one cannot deny that it has served as a liberating force for many spiritually impoverished people, helping them to recognize the supremacy of those very values that Christianity proposes to preserve. Unfortunately, along with these benefits, the growth of Spiritualism constitutes a real danger to some of the richest and most profound truths of the Christian faith. The progress of Spiritualism in Brazil and, I believe, in many other countries, presents a real challenge to all Christians to live and carry to the world the message of a whole and consistent Christian faith.

# **Christianity and African Faiths and Beliefs**

'BOLA IGE

We have preferred to use "African faiths and beliefs" rather than "African fetishes, fancies, and witchcraft" or "African animism" for a variety of reasons. The latter terms might be suitable to describe the religious practices of really primitive peoples in some remote parts of the continent, but they surely would be inadequate for the comparatively highly organized religious systems of the partially monarchical Buganda, Yoruba, or Hausa peoples, among whom the problem of reconciling Christianity and indigenous beliefs really arises. It is also possible that such terms were used in the early days of nineteenth-century missionary endeavour to cover every religious system not understood by the over-zealous Christian pioneers, especially in view of the political and economic position of Africa vis-à-vis Europe.

## *The hold of traditional beliefs*

It would be dangerous to describe the faiths and beliefs of the diverse African peoples as animism, for to do so would be to minimize the hold which these traditional beliefs have even on sophisticated Africans. Animism can be cleared away by education and technological advancement. The educated African who rejects Christianity is not necessarily agnostic, although he may affect it as a result of Western education ; his spiritual background is one which accepts an almighty god who can be appealed to, even if through numerous intermediaries. These intermediaries are not worshipped in place of this supreme god, although they are given their due respect. Among the Yoruba people of Nigeria, for example, the supreme deity is Olorun — the possessor of heaven — and the intermediaries and lesser gods are Orisa. Ceremonies, festivals, and rituals are observed with a regularity and a method comparable to that of any known organized religion. And the influence of the priests in the community is not small. So in a way,

whether an African belongs to a "foreign" organized religion or not, his mind is fettered by these basic beliefs, which combine to form within him an indefinable "something".

In any case, in 1958, in areas of rapid social change of West Africa especially, and also in East, Central, and South Africa, the labels stuck on in the nineteenth century appear, rightly or wrongly, outworn or unacceptable. This fact ought to be faced when new strategy for future missionary activity is being thought out. Whereas in past centuries missionaries could bully converts into abandoning their "idols" and destroying utterly their arts and crafts in order to show quite clearly that they had broken with their pagan past, such methods cannot succeed now that it is well known that many things of great cultural significance were thus destroyed and misrepresented.

#### *No common coherent philosophy in African beliefs*

There is, however, no common fundamental philosophy which underlies the faiths and beliefs of the different African peoples. Certain practices and modes of worship may be identical. Ancestor-worship, for example, is common throughout the continent; it is found among the Yorubas who are said to have migrated from the Middle East and Egypt between 900 and 1100 A.D., among the Ashanti, the Efiks, the Bantu groups in Central and South Africa, and the Sudanese peoples of Northern Nigeria and West Africa. But ancestor-worship is not peculiar to Africans.

When we say that it is not possible to discern any coherent philosophy in African beliefs, we are using "philosophy" in the sense in which Michel Philibert uses it in his article in *The Student World*, No. 2, 1958, entitled "Existentialism and Marxism":

...a philosophy is not only a sum or a system of principles and affirmations expressing a general conception of man and of the world. A philosophy is certainly such a system, but one elaborated by a particular mind, and the affirmations which this mind makes about the nature of things, about the meaning of history, about the duties of man, only have their full significance when they are seen

in relation to the experiences out of which they grew, to the movement of thought which sustains and justifies them, in short, to a method of research, an original way of stating problems.

What is generally known of indigenous African beliefs is what foreign anthropologists, or native anthropologists working according to foreign educational methods, have concocted. This is made worse by the fact that most of the research is based on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the darkest period in the history of African peoples — the centuries when the kingdoms of Melle, Songhai, Ghana, Yoruba, Benin, and Zimbabwe saw disintegration and anarchy of the worst type. What we have, therefore, among the various African peoples today is an incomplete manifestation of early religious systems ingrained in their behaviour and in their spirit. Two hundred years of missionary contact has not succeeded in excising these fundamental beliefs.

Nor is there anything like an African religion in the sense that we have the Moslem, or Hindu, or Buddhist religion. But we do have (or perhaps more correctly, we had) a Yoruba religion, an Akan religion, etc. Though the Yoruba religion, for example, has been emasculated — a religion that was highly and effectively organized among some five million people — and its priests have lost their former importance, the latter are still turned to by many Yorubas when and where Christian priests are thought to be of no avail.

The other point which ought to be mentioned before we go further concerns the adjective "African". Many people use the word to lump together all the inhabitants of the "Dark Continent" as if they belonged to the same racial stock, were one people with the same history, the same institutions, and the same temperament. In truth, we all have one common feature — a "black" skin — but the Yorubas are as different from the people of Buganda as the Indian Tamil is from the Thai or the Nepalese from the Japanese. We shall try not to fall into the same mistake which other people make ; where necessary, we shall refer to particular ethnic groups or countries or churches.

*The persistence of indigenous religious practices*

We have said that the early missionaries considered all African beliefs and religious practices primitive and inferior to the Christian faith. But what was often meant by "Christian" was European — British, French, Portuguese, or German. For example, nothing would satisfy David and Anne Hinderer in Nigeria but that the newly converted Christians among the Yorubas of Abeokuta and Ibadan should break down their houses of worship, and burn or destroy beautifully wrought stools, decorations, statues, carvings, and emblems of the offices, most of which had no symbolic religious significance. Of course, they did not have much success with the people who mattered in those days, and only the children of poor people were given to them to instruct in their "strange" ways. The aristocracy which wielded political and priestly powers was not touched or impressed by these missionaries. This religio-political pseudo-monarchical community life still exists among the Yorubas in spite of modern democratic patchwork. The Oba (king) was advised by the Ogbonis who were the legislature and the executive. Since the king was the spiritual and political ruler, these advisers too performed spiritual and political functions in his name. With the coming of the British and the introduction of the "indirect rule", these Ogbonis have become less effective functionaries, and today we have what has been transformed into a cult or Yoruba freemasonry called "Reformed Ogboni Fraternity" or "Awo Opa" or "Ogboni". These societies practise indigenous Yoruba rites, in a language extremely strange to ordinary Yoruba people. Many of the leaders of the Anglican Church in Nigeria, and some leaders of the other Protestant churches (including some Europeans) belong to these societies, and wear the *shaki* and other colourful paraphernalia at public ceremonies. Recently, much controversy has arisen over whether members of such cults should be given Christian burial, for the Ogbonis, however Christian they may be, have their own way of disposing of the bodies of their dead brethren.

It has often been said that the African is a religious man. This may be attributed to fear, or primitiveness, or supersti-

tion, or simple reverence, depending on one's outlook. His general background is one in which rituals, processions, and ceremonies play an important part. Even today most African Christians or Moslems ask the advice and prayers of their clergymen or *mallams* before setting out on any journey, or sending their children to schools far from home, or undertaking any venture ; they come and offer thanks to God if the harvest is plentiful, if someone returns from hospital, or if two neighbours are reconciled. It is not insignificant that the Roman Catholic Church and Christian sects which employ rituals and ceremonies in their services, and whose pastoral care is more personal, keep their adherents better than Protestant churches generally do. A run-through of the form of morning prayer in the Church of England Book of Common Prayer is not particularly appealing to the African, whose fundamental temperament and make-up generally desire active participation in worship.

#### *Confusion of customs with religion*

What then is the present relationship between Christianity and African beliefs, and how is Christianity to be prevented from becoming contaminated through the infiltration of these indigenous beliefs and practices ? Before we attempt to answer these questions, we would like to clear up one point. There has been a grievous mistake in the past in thinking that such customs as polygamous marriages, dowries, bride-price, and circumcision, are synonymous with, or are based on, African faiths and beliefs : they really have no such basis. To suppose, therefore, that the task of the Christian Church is to persuade Africans to abandon these customs, and that all will then be well, is as wrong as to think that an ex-communist will necessarily become a Christian. Political and economic factors will sooner or later force the abandonment of these practices, and it is time Christians stopped wasting their energy trying to westernize African customs.

This point needs to be emphasized again and again, although we are aware that this article is not intended to deal with African customs. In the past, European missionaries, through blissful ignorance, confused customs with indigenous religions,

and thereby caused themselves unnecessary difficulties in their evangelistic task. Even today, in many parts of Africa, church leaders — Europeans, and in places like West Africa, thoroughly westernized, loyal Africans — continue to deprive converts and potential members of the Church of full membership through a narrow and bigoted interpretation of some of the canons of the Church. In Uganda, for example, adulterous church-married couples may receive Holy Communion as often as they wish, while many faithful couples — monogamous though married according to local custom, validly and legally — are considered to be living in sin, and children of such marriages are not accepted for baptism, although even under English law such children are legitimate. And what Christian charity is there in asking a newly converted polygamously married man to send away all his wives but one, and then to come and marry that one in the church ?

Whether we like it or not, the Church is not likely to gain anything in the near future by supporting changes in traditional customs simply because such changes conform with norms in the West. On the contrary, with the waning influence of churches and their educational institutions in rapidly changing Africa, such Western-orientated changes are likely to be deliberately opposed. For example, one would like the Church to interpret monogamy as the best state of Christian marriage, based on the Christian conception of the union of a man and a woman till death do them part, of the equality and dignity of man and woman before God, etc., rather than on what is generally done in Britain or America. Many educated Africans have a very poor view of monogamy as practised in "Christian" Europe and America. And it does take time for the rural African farmers to understand the above-mentioned concepts of marriage, especially as our Bible-thumbing friends have no texts to which to refer them. In Kenya and East Africa, the churches have many times adopted a most foolish attitude instead of trying to understand the Kikuyu people's method of circumcising their children, or at least trying to explain their own point of view regarding this. The churches just write the ceremonies off as bad, of course in "theologically Christian" language, a language which ninety-eight per cent of Kikuyu Christians do not understand.

*Relationship between Christianity and indigenous faiths undefined*

To return from the above digression, what is the present relationship between Christianity and indigenous faiths and beliefs? One must admit frankly that it is undefined. The reasons for this are fourfold:

1. Until a few years ago no serious efforts were made to discover whether or not indigenous beliefs were compatible with Christian faith. The problem was shied away from, especially as many missionaries worked according to the edicts of the headquarters offices abroad, and as their financial support came from abroad, they naturally did not wish to be said to encourage pagan rites by understanding indigenous religions.

2. For a long time it was thought by missionary bodies that education and church-going would cut the converts off from their traditional religious roots. They did not foresee perhaps that they were merely creating Africans with a sort of ambivalent attitude to religion — a very serious problem today.

3. As long as most of the education was given through church schools, conformity to "Christian" standards was not difficult to exact. This went hand in hand with the fact that missionaries were in a way agents of colonial powers, and opposition to them was more often than not construed as a manifestation of political agitation. The local aristocrats who would not accept these standards kept their children and near relatives away from schools.

4. The middle-class-mindedness of the churches drove missionaries and their now prosperous converts (education meant getting white collar jobs, etc.) into a form of holy huddle, with little thought of evangelizing among the illiterate and peasant folk in the villages and among the aristocratic feudal lords. Where some more adventurous missions did go into the villages, they dispensed medicines, etc. and flung Bible texts at the people. It is true to say that missions did not examine the clay they wished to mould.

And so today we have large numbers of African Christians, especially in the towns, but there is no doubt that most of them are nominal. Christianity is perched dangerously on a strong traditional faith; it does not understand this curious

foundation, nor does this foundation know what is this strange superstructure. The ordinary African Christian uses the one or the other, as occasion demands. But often he is confused as he does not know on which one to rely more. This situation is especially tragic for urbanized and "detribalized" Africans in South Africa, who have to live far away from their ethnic groups. The inherent religious temperament of the Sesotho makes him turn to the Christian faith, but usually this new faith does not urge him to examine his old faith. The new faith speaks to him with a pleasant voice, but the language he knows and understands is that of his old faith. As a believer he may agree with you that ancestor-worship is wrong, but do not be surprised if you find the Anglican Archdeacon or the Methodist Superintendent naming his son, born soon after the death of his father or of his father-in-law, Babatunde, a Yoruba name which means "Father has come back".

### *Opportunities and dangers for Christianity*

How then can the contamination or infiltration of Christianity by these indigenous beliefs be prevented? We have pointed out that it is generally correct to say that today there is no organized religion with a recognized coherent philosophy among any of the peoples of Africa. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage to Christianity. It is an advantage because a coherent Christian interpretation of man, the world, and religion can deflate any petty local theory. Christianity can lay claim to universality, to traditions, to the inspired writings and teachings of the Church, etc., whereas indigenous religions have only oral traditions. An ineffective and unorganized indigenous religious belief cannot be a hindrance to an advancing and militant religion — *vide* the present advance of Mohammedanism among the Yorubas and in East Africa, although syncretism is quite obvious. If the churches re-examine and re-understand the meaning of "mission", they are not likely to face the type of difficulty they are confronting in Asia, where there is a resurgence of Hinduism and Buddhism.

But the disadvantage is that because there is no recognized coherent philosophy for any of these indigenous faiths, the

churches are likely to minimize the danger they are facing. Because the religion of the Yorubas is different from the religion of the Ashantis, churches among these people must learn about many beliefs and modify their strategy accordingly. Christianity is not only to be practised on Sundays and feast-days ; it must rule the total life of every Christian, his actions and his thoughts, in the way indigenous religions do. If ancestor-worship is debunked as unchristian, surely an intelligible alternative meaning to "the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting" must be presented. This is a task for all Christian theologians — African and non-African.

Unless the Church recognizes these situations, one of two things is likely to happen. We may have a body of Christians made up largely of the middle class, products of missionary enterprise, who take traditional beliefs for granted and practise them — outside the Church, or sometimes even within. For example, we are not yet sure in Nigeria how right it is for a chief who worships at a pagan shrine during his installation to come and give thanks at the altar the following Sunday. And clergymen are taking chieftaincy titles these days. We do not yet know whether the Ogboni fraternity is really like European freemasonry — their emblem is a skull, but one hears hymn tunes floating from their secret lodges — although many middle-class Christians belong to these cults today. This class of Christians, although they may hold political and ecclesiastical positions today, are not really equipped to teach the true Christian faith. They neither understand the faith they profess nor know the faith of others. But because the Church wants to keep these people — presumably in order to boast of what has been materially achieved — it may unconsciously allow syncretism to creep in, and because these African rites and ceremonies are not sufficiently understood to be classified, they may not be disapproved of, to the detriment of the Christian faith. We shall then continue to have conservative churches as we have now, and Christianity will come to be looked upon as a foreign curiosity to be acquired in order to display one's status.

If, on the other hand, the Church continues to be unnecessarily strict and to exclude everything African because it is not easy to distinguish between African beliefs and customs,

it will allow itself to be branded a foreign importation to be packed out with the British, French, and other colonial powers. As a matter of fact, the Church will not then be able to witness to millions in the villages ; it will become a mere ghetto, and continue to arouse anger on such points as we have mentioned above.

### *The task of the Church*

What then is to be done in this dilemma ? First, Christian leaders must begin to formulate a theology in an African context. This has to be done in cooperation with African and non-African theologians. The minds of diverse African peoples have to be probed, and their beliefs and faiths recognized and respected. This must be done quickly, as time is against us. African governments are beginning to sponsor research projects to write the history of their peoples and their religions ; this may or may not lead to a resurgence of indigenous religions. Secondly, the meaning of the "mission" of the Church has to be redefined. Thirdly, the Church must be prepared to set its face against those traditional beliefs which are patently unchristian, when judged by the life and teaching of our Lord and his Church, and not merely by Western social tradition. For example, there can be no tolerance for any Yoruba Christian who takes active part in the yearly *egungun* festival, when dead ancestors are said to return to earth to be appeased or invoked. Nor can the Church allow altars to be soiled with the blood of goats and rams at harvest time, although there can be nothing wrong in live animals being delivered up as first-fruits of hard labour at thanksgiving services. Nor can the Church condone "divination" under the guise of seeking the priest's guidance and blessing.

Before we conclude we should like to say that we realize that some "churches" which have pandered to the beliefs and faiths of the indigenous people have arrived at a point where it would take considerable broadmindedness to call them "Christian". We must add, however, that these sects are offshoots of missionary churches, and that they have no theology they can call their own. Some have grown up in reaction against the bigotry or racialist practices of the established churches,

some as a nationalist manifestation in reaction against the bad faith of whites among them, but more often they have thrived because they allow less strict *mores*, for example, not disapproving of polygamy. But these sects would not be so popular if Christian churches had not failed. Not only that: these sects pattern themselves *not* on traditional faiths but on the Old Testament, complete with elaborate regalia, fasting, speaking in tongues, seeing visions, use of so-called Hebrew holy names, etc. It need also be mentioned that those who flock to these sects are mostly Protestants or those whom Protestant churches have excluded. Moslems and Roman Catholics are seldom found among them. Most of these sects do not practise local rites, although there is no doubt that Old Testament forms of worship are perhaps as spiritually satisfying as traditional rituals.

Indigenization of external forms of worship must be vigorously pursued. For example, the sooner all hymns are set and sung to intelligible native tunes the better for the Church and for African Christians. The argument that some of the tunes may be based on former pagan tunes is trivial; it is the words sung that matter. Many African peoples love rituals, and would not dislike vigorous singing and incense-burning. We may ask ourselves whether we do not have much to learn from Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches which make and keep far more converts—and loyal and faithful converts they are.

What Christians do with their faith in the next few years may decide whether Christianity will have a permanent foothold among the peoples of Africa. Political and economic successes have placed Christians in dominant positions, but this will not always remain so. The task of the Church is to preach Christ to *all* the people, to preach and worship in the language the ordinary folk understand. God is ever at work, but the Church must not make itself an ineffective instrument by refusing to recognize that Christianity is not an antithesis to every African faith, belief, or custom. A full understanding of these beliefs and desires will strengthen the Church and Christianity against an osmotic invasion by potent, even if despised and unrecognized, dangerous, indigenous religious practices and susceptibilities.

# THE STUDENT WORLD CHRONICLE

## Christian Theism

*On June 12, 1957, Bishop K. H. Ting, President of Nanking Theological Seminary, made the following address to the students, and it was reprinted in the Nanking Theological Review for August 1957. The translation is by F. P. Jones, amended by A. F. Lutley, and has not been corrected by the author.*

Our Christian belief in God is in general not the result of our being persuaded by some theory or proof, but of spiritual experience. This is not surprising. We know our own mother, not because we have been persuaded by some argument or demonstration, but because from childhood up we have felt her love. Many carpenters who have no idea of how the figure 3.1416 is arrived at know that the circumference of a circle is a little more than three times its diameter, and this is enough for the practical needs of their work.

But for a theological student or church worker today to know only that he believes in God, and not to know how to give a reasoned explanation of this belief, is far from enough. Theological discussion today is too important to be neglected. We know that the various atheistic theories are wrong, but we must also know wherein they are wrong, and still more, what the right view is. We must think deeper and strengthen our faith, so that when we go out to preach the truth of the Gospel our words may carry weight because of their reasonableness. In I Peter 3 : 15 we read, "Be ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear". That is why you have come to the seminary, to make this preparation. Otherwise you would not have come. Now I want to suggest several points for your consideration.

### *Christianity and the idealism-materialism question*

Is Christianity idealist or materialist? Many people both within and without the Church are interested in this question. Some Christians are concerned to deny that Christianity is idealist, because to be idealist is to be backward: some are trying hard to prove that Christianity is materialistic, because to be materialistic is to be progressive.

Some people think that materialists are of necessity progressive, and idealists backward, or even reactionary. But in reality the

situation is not so simple as that. The early Taoists, and Laotze and Chuangtze, did not believe in God or any spirits, but explained everything by the heavenly *tao* resident in all nature ; they thus had a strong tendency towards atheistic and materialistic thought. But at the same time they reflected strongly the feelings of the decadent aristocracy and represented decadent aristocratic interests. Wang Yang-ming's doctrine of an instinctive conscience would seem to be idealist<sup>1</sup>, but it encouraged a spirit of individual initiative, a recognition of right and wrong, and a questioning of tradition, which both in his time and since has had a forward-looking influence in the world of thought too important to be neglected.

It is not the Christian method to divide all thinking into the two categories of materialist and idealist, with a deep gulf between them. People ask if Christianity is materialist or idealist. I would reply that this is not the way in which Christians would frame the question. Other people may ask the question if they like, but we are not obliged to answer it. To accept such an obligation and try to answer that question is unconsciously to step outside Christianity in search of the answer. We Christians do not as Christians ask that question.

There are many ways of dividing mankind. Some are universally approved ; there are others which are questioned. No one questions the validity of dividing all mankind into the two categories of men and women, or of dividing the present generation according to their age into those born in the nineteenth or in the twentieth century, for a twenty-first century birth is still to come, and all those born in the eighteenth century are now dead. (Recently, however, newspapers reported the death of the world's oldest man, a Soviet citizen one hundred and fifty-seven years old.)

But there are other classifications which only command a limited assent, which some will regard as inadequate as they fail to take into account certain important factors. For example, many Westerners, in order to vilify Communism, would classify all Communists as either Stalinist or anti-Stalinist. But there is no need for this classification : it is in fact only intended to confuse the mind and break up the fellowship. Again, the Jews considered circumcision very important, and divided all men into the two categories of the circumcised and the uncircumcised. But Paul said, "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature". As a Christian, the question which he raised was whether a person had or had not become a new creature.

<sup>1</sup> And thus defective. (Translator's note.)

We Christians do not think that it is a satisfactory classification to call all shades of thought either materialist or idealist. It is a hopeless simplification of the facts. Historically, right down to the present day, there has never been a one hundred per cent materialist or a one hundred per cent idealist. Idealism and materialism not only stand opposed, they also inter-penetrate each other ; they are not only mutually opposed, they influence one another as well ; they are not only mutually in conflict, they are also mutually in agreement. There is some idealism in all materialism, and some materialism in all idealism. Someone has said, "T'ao Hsing-chih was once an idealist, and then his name was T'ao Chih-hsing. Afterwards he became a materialist, and changed his name to T'ao Hsing-chih."<sup>1</sup> But I cannot think of Mr. T'ao as simply as that. Man is the most complex of animals and his thinking is very complex. In the realm of thought there is certainly development. In the matter of men's names there may be change. But intellectual development is not a denial of continuity ; rather it is its recognition. The Soviet Philosophical Dictionary describes Pavlov as follows : "great Russian physiologist and thinker... inheritor of 19th century Russian materialistic philosophy and the progressive traditions of naturalistic science... his theories dealt a death blow to idealistic psychology and laid the foundation of true scientific materialism". And yet we know that Pavlov was at the same time a devout member of the Orthodox Church. Evidently the co-existence of materialism and idealism is as common as their mutual opposition.

It is still more impossible to classify Christianity as either idealist or materialist, because, although it is in form the product of history, it is in its essence not an ideology, not a structure built upon an economic base. Its true substance is revelation, the Incarnation, and thus it transcends all human lines of division. A few Christians today do not understand this point, and so they try to draw a line between materialism and idealism, and say "We are not idealist" or even say "We are materialist". This is all very unnecessary, because we do not need to accept the classification itself.

Christianity in its organization, its thought, its ceremonies, and in the styles of its architecture, has of course been deeply influenced by human history, but in itself it is not the fruit of history, and the Gospel is certainly not an ideology. The Gospel comes from the

<sup>1</sup> T'ao Chih-hsing (chih, to know ; hsing, to act) i.e. Mr. T'ao who knew how to act (with the emphasis on knowledge) changed his name to T'ao Hsing-chih, i.e. Mr. T'ao who could carry out what he knew (with the emphasis on action). (Translator's note.)

revelation of God on God's own initiative. This Gospel is Christ himself, through whom all things were made. A theologian of Western Europe has said, "The greatest danger facing Western theology today is that of reducing Christianity to an ideology, and thus of placing it in opposition to another ideology — Communism". This is true. If we remember that what we preach is the Gospel, is Christ, something in its very nature entirely different from all ideologies, something which moves in a different orbit from any system of thought, then we shall have a clear understanding ; we shall realize that all talk of a comparison of Christianity with Communism, all discussion of the differences and similarities and conflicts, is beside the point and superfluous.

### *Is Christianity an opiate ?*

"Religion is the opium of the people." This sentence of Marx is sufficiently cutting.

But regardless of how applicable this saying is to Christianity, let us note, first of all, that the point of the criticism is directed against the effect of religion at certain times and on certain persons and not against religion itself.

To analyse the effect which religious belief has had upon some individual is one thing. But whether God exists or not is an entirely different question. Let us grant for argument's sake that you have discovered that the religion of certain individuals has had a narcotic effect upon them. But this discovery does not at all prove that the universe is without a Creator. The mental state of some believers may be unstable, so that they seek for an anaesthetic, and use religion as an opiate, and some preachers may even present religion in this light ; and of course this is not good. But how can this prove that God does not exist ? The thinking of some religious believers is backward and needs help, but the fact that these backward believers use religion as an opiate does not prove that there is no God. Similarly, if they were progressive, that would not prove that God exists. The existence of God is a different and independent question.

There are many things in the world which are used as opiates ; it is not just religion that is wrongly used. Literature, art, science — all can become means of intoxication and escape from reality. The other day we had a meeting with some students from the University of Nanking, and some of them were students of astronomy. I said to them, "Let us imagine a man who because of some great suffering has become very pessimistic about the world, his country, and his family ; the thought of escaping from it all grows stronger and stronger ; so he seeks for an opiate to drug his spirit. Is it not

possible that such a man would choose astronomy as his opiate ? In order to cut himself off from the world he might sit day and night in his observatory with his telescope as his companion, drawing calmness of mind from the great emptiness of space. But this would not mean that the sun, the moon, and the stars which he saw through his telescope did not really exist. On the contrary, it is possible that his observations might make a great contribution to the advance of astronomy. His subjective psychological state is one thing, the objective existence of the universe is quite another thing."

If anyone on discovering that certain religious believers in certain periods of history have used religion as an opiate should draw the conclusion that therefore God does not exist, we should say to them, "Your logic is not good. You have no right to draw that conclusion from that premise."

Certainly it is a painful fact that we cannot and need not deny that religion has been preached by some preachers and received by some believers as an opiate. "Religion is the opiate of the people" : this forceful statement was made some time before Marx by an English clergyman, Charles Kingsley, a man who had great sympathy for the downtrodden working classes. At that time, the destructive system of capitalism was beginning to make great strides, the life and security of the workers was without protection, and even five- and six-year-old children had to work in the factories under inhuman conditions. In the face of such conditions the Church of that day did nothing but urge people to control themselves and accept tyranny, saying that after this life they would enjoy happiness in heaven. That was why Kingsley made this stinging statement. But the use of Christianity as an opiate is an accident, and does not belong to the essence of Christianity. In Matthew 27 : 34 we read that when our Lord hung upon the cross, a well-minded individual, wishing to relieve the pains of Christ's death, offered him a cup of some opiate, which "when he had tasted he would not drink". Did he not have the right to drink it ? Why did he refuse ? Our Lord at the end of his human life, at that most important moment when he was bearing the sins of all mankind upon the cross, wanted to keep a clear mind and spirit to the very end. He was not willing to use a drugged and benumbed mind to complete the work which his Father had given him to do. See, how without hesitation he refused the opiate. Consider, if he had consented to drink the drug, he would have escaped the pain, but then he would no longer have recognized those around him, the Seven Great Words from the cross would have been left unsaid, and how dark and obscure the cross itself would have been.

What Christ gives men is forgiveness, consolation, and strength, not an opiate. We pray, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". Where is there any opiate in that prayer? This is the highest religion, the religion of revelation, that is, Christianity. St. Ambrose (340-397) once said, "You rich men, when will your greed have an end? Will it continue until there is nothing left on earth except yourselves? How do you dare to take all nature for your own? The world was made for all men, how can you claim it for your private property? Nature does not recognize the rich, those whom it nurtures are the poor, the masses. The products of nature are for the common use of all, and God wants the world and all it contains to be for the use of all mankind." The saint who said this was not a man who had been benumbed by some opiate. In the national museum at Prague there is a statue of the reformer, John Hus, on which is carved this memorable saying of his, "Woe to me if I keep silent. If I do not speak out against the gravest evils, then I become an accomplice of sin and hell, and it were better that I had never been born." Who dares to say that a man who talks like this has been drugged with an opiate? Today people do not because of the backward nature of early Communist society distrust the future of the Communist world; they do not because of the absurdities of alchemy despise modern chemistry, nor do they because of the superstitions of old-time astrology laugh at modern astronomy. In the same way you cannot judge the Gospel of Christ in terms of opiates.

One should study religion concretely, and not proceed from *a priori* definitions; otherwise one will fall into the error of dogmatism. Feudal rulers had the despicable habit of pretending to act on behalf of heaven, and using this as an excuse to oppress the people. But the T'ai-ping leaders, when they claimed to be appointed by heaven, were supported by comrades everywhere, and they really did liberate the people from cruel oppression. Both used the word "heaven", but with what a different meaning. We cannot afford not to make clear distinctions between things that are really different. In the middle ages the contending schools of nominalists and realists were both faithful to Roman theology, but any moderately careful philosopher knows that we cannot consider them alike, and without discrimination label them both reactionary. Paradox<sup>1</sup> is an entirely theological idea, but it cannot be denied that ever since science was liberated from obscurantism, great use

<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps, "dialectic". The Chinese is, literally, "two kinds of truth". (Translator's note.)

has been made of the idea of paradox. Today it is of real value in efforts to raise the level of religious thought. If we say that religion is by its very nature reactionary, and that all religions are equally reactionary, so that the progressive manifestations of religion are for that reason more dangerous than the reactionary manifestations, how do critics explain the attitude of the Chinese Christian Church today which has shown itself to be patriotic and which upholds socialism ?

### *The existence of God*

The Bible does not discuss the question of the existence of God. The first book in the Bible does not begin with an argument in favour of the existence of God, but with an affirmation of it, with the declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth".

Why did not God manifest himself to us in such a way that his existence could not be doubted ? We know that God is invisible, infinite, indefinable. To lay down a definition implies limitations. But God is infinite, and anything man can define is not God. Everything in the world is subject to definition ; only God breaks through every definition that man makes. St. Anselm said, "God is that than which nothing greater can be imagined". Clement of Alexandria said, "We cannot know what God is, but we can know to some extent what he is not". If the existence of God were as plain to you as the existence of this pulpit, what spiritual value would there be in faith ? Faith is higher than scientific demonstration. Faith is the only thing in the world that will call men to great achievement and limitless sacrifice. Someone has said, "Religion is betting your life on the existence of God". Yes, religion is adventure, fellowship, love ; it is deep calling to deep. Science may one day discover the existence on Mars of intelligent beings like men, but that scientific demonstration will not give us fellowship with them. Fellowship can be established only upon the basis of mutual trust. Take the parable of the Prodigal Son. The elder brother was living a tasteless life without faith, hope, or charity. Although he daily saw the face of his father, yet his father's existence meant nothing to him, much less was there any real fellowship. But when the younger brother had come to the end of everything, his one thought was to return to the bosom of his merciful father. You may call it adventure, or staking all on a single throw. Certainly it was a venture of faith. And so he returned. And what he found was that he truly became the son of his father. And after this experience his knowledge of his father, and his relationship with his father,

was something different from what it had been before. The father's love has now transcended scientific demonstration and become the experience of faith. This relationship and this experience not even the elder brother could understand, and still less could outsiders know what "this deep calling to deep" really was. Do you agree?

How far can a man go in understanding God on the basis of his own reason and his observation and analysis of nature?

From observation of nature a man perceives a certain order in nature, and concludes that behind nature there is a mind and wisdom and intelligence. The Roman Emperor and philosopher, Marcus Aurelius — he was not a Christian — once said, "This world is either a haphazard miscellany or an ordered unity. If it is the former, what is there worth my attention except how I myself will ultimately return to dust? But if it is the latter, then I am in the presence of the mind that created that order; I am filled with awe, and have a ground on which to stand."

If you were walking through a trackless desert and came upon a wristwatch lying on the ground, you would at once conclude that someone had been there before you, for the sands of the desert, no matter how they evolved, would never of themselves produce a wristwatch. The wristwatch in itself is an indication of a mind, an intelligence, a purpose. Now the universe is much more complicated than a wristwatch, and its workings much more exact. How could it possibly be the result of an accidental concurrence of phenomena, without a mind or intelligence behind it? We cannot deny that behind the manifestations of nature there must be a mind, an intelligence, a purpose. Of course, to make this affirmation does not solve every problem, but to fail to make this affirmation leaves still more problems unsolved.

Anyone who calmly views the universe ought at least to reach this conclusion. But if he views the universe only in the light of reason, he will not be able to proceed further. He will not be able from nature to perceive more than this about the God who transcends nature. If this were not so, every scientist would be a theologian!

You will see that I am pessimistic about the ability of man by his reason to find and recognize God in nature. But you can each one consider and decide this question for yourselves. I maintain that all that nature can give us is a certain sense of something immeasurable and mysterious, resulting in a feeling that the universe is beyond man's power to interpret.

Paul told the Athenians to "seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he be not far from every one

of us ; for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17 : 27-28). Again, "God hath not left himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14 : 17). Again, "The invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Romans 1 : 20). But on the basis of human reason how much can we know of this God ? We can know something of his creative activity, but how much can we know of his purity, his righteousness, his love, and his redemptive purpose ? Who would not have a pessimistic answer to this question ? We cannot help recalling the Old Testament words, "Canst thou by searching find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection ?" (Job 11 : 7). So it is not surprising that Paul also presents another side to the picture. He said, "After that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe".

The foolishness of preaching is nothing else than the revealed truth of God. The mystery of nature can be unfolded only by revelation. Only after we have accepted the revelation, and come to know the Lord of revelation, can we understand the mystery of nature. But from that moment on, we can see in every part of nature the handiwork of God.

Let us take an illustration. You are graduating this year. You think, I have been away from home for four years, I must go home and see my mother before reporting for work. But when you get there, she is not at home. But you know her and love her dearly, and as you go in to her room and look around, everything in the room, her needle and thread, and footrule, remind you of her. But now supposing you had one of your classmates with you, one who did not know your mother, as he looks around the room it will have no special significance for him ; to him it is just a room.

Man is like this with nature. Unless you have come to know God through revelation, nature itself will only be space and mystery, and not much else. But if after receiving the revelation you again look at nature, all is now new. You now perceive that the whole of nature, and all the truth, beauty and goodness of the world, proclaim the glory and the working of God.

In short, we Christians on the one hand recognize that the witness of nature is not enough ; we cannot expect to know God from it, and therefore we are not disturbed or alarmed when a man says that he cannot find God in nature. On the other hand, we do not

look upon nature with hostility or deny it, because it is after all the handiwork of God. St. Thomas Aquinas summed it up very well, "Grace does not deny nature, it fulfils it".

Finally then, the knowledge of God comes only through revelation. John 1:18 tells us : "No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him". And the Lord Jesus himself says, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life ; no man cometh to the Father but by me". The truth of these two passages is borne out by the experience of Christians down the centuries.

### *Environment and sin*

Modern atheistic thinking has a tendency to attribute all the ills in society to a bad social system, as though there was no other cause of them within man himself.

For Christians themselves this tendency is an important and useful corrective. In the past we thought little about the social order. Our bias was simply to attribute all evil to man's sinful nature. We said, the question of sin is the only real question ; once that question is solved, any social system will be good, and if it is not solved, no social system will be good. Today we must acknowledge our mistake. It is true that the question of sin is fundamental. But we cannot expect everybody to repent at once, and thus solve the problem of sin. Before men have repented and been born again, it is still necessary for men to live together. Under what social system can men best live together ? This is a very big question which we cannot ignore. The difference between a socialist social system and a capitalist social system is enormous. Our study during these years has helped to show us the superiority of socialism. We certainly ought not to think of the two systems as of equal value.

But can we deny the existence of sin ? Certainly not.

In the New China the level of morality has been greatly raised. Does that mean that the question of sin has been solved ? Decidedly not.

The fact that man must come into a very good environment (New China) before he consciously manifests a better standard of behaviour does not at all mean that man is without sin ; rather it is a demonstration that man is carrying the heavy burden of sin, which makes it impossible for him to overcome his environment. Consider your old grandfather or grandmother, crippled with rheumatism so that they cannot move around at all in the winter. Then spring and summer come, and they become gradually more lively.

Does that mean that they are now very well. No, it only shows clearly the weakness of their bodies.

Not long ago I went to visit some country churches, and on the long-distance bus I sat by the driver, and I noticed how he had both hands on the wheel, turning it now to the right now to the left, always on the alert. And I wondered, if the road were perfectly straight and perfectly level, and the bus had been facing in exactly the right direction, would it be possible for the driver not to need to be so alert? Could he take his hands from the wheel and sit there reading a book? I answered my own question, No. Even if the road were as straight as a ruler, and as level as a pane of glass, there cannot be absolute accuracy in the construction of the bus, and there is bound to be a certain amount of play in the setting of the wheels. And if there is any play at all, even if it is too small to be measured, the result would be that without the steering of the driver the car would sooner or later go into the ditch. As a saying in one of the old classics has it, "An error of a thousandth of an inch can put one out by a thousand miles". Of course the straighter and smoother the road the better. But a good road cannot take the place of a responsible driver. Even the most up-to-date factory cannot produce a car which will obviate this weakness inherent in the nature of a car. Man's life in the world is like this. We must work for an improved social order and environment, but man's sin is not thereby eliminated; we still need our Lord to come and hold the steering wheel of our life.

In a school where I once studied we had in the gymnasium a ball about the size of a basketball, but very much heavier. A piece of steel had been placed inside it, but not put in the middle. In the course of the game, however much you tried to roll it straight along the floor, it was impossible to make it go in a straight line. It was very exasperating. Is not man's life like that? In the presence of God, man yesterday, today, and tomorrow can still be described in the words of Isaiah, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way" (53:6).

In today's society the level of moral action has been raised, and this is a fact which we Christians should welcome. We should not go around looking for flaws, blackening people's reputations, as if the only way to satisfy us were to find out the faults of others. We should welcome a social system that shows itself able to raise the level of moral life. But the change of social system can only limit the power of sin; it cannot solve the problem of sin. Sin can only be healed by forgiveness, salvation, and grace. It is not a matter of social progress. The two matters should not be confused.

Someone will accuse me of having too pessimistic a view of man. But this is not pessimism : it is the greatest optimism. When the Prodigal Son repented of his sin, our Lord says of him, "He became himself" (Luke 15:17). Evidently in his sin he was not himself, but when he repented his true self was revealed. From this we can see that the Lord Jesus had a very high view of man, one which cannot be called pessimistic.

### *The reasons for unbelief*

Other people have already analyzed the reasons why religious people believe in God, saying that we are looking for an opiate. I have already said what I want to on that subject, but now let us do some analyzing ourselves, and find why it is that from the beginning of history there have been people who did not believe in God. There are two reasons, the first a general and universal one, the second one that applies particularly to this century.

#### *I. Moral and spiritual reasons*

To believe in God or to believe that there are living beings on Mars may seem both to be acts of believing, but they are vastly different. To believe that there is life on Mars, if you believe it you believe it, and if you don't you don't ; it makes no difference to your spiritual life. It makes no demands upon you : whether you believe or do not believe, your life, your thinking, your actions will be the same.

Belief in God is a different thing : if you don't believe, that is all there is to it ; but if you do believe, the consequences are great.

Adam sinned, and then when Jehovah drew near, he hid himself in the trees, because he did not dare to look upon the face of Jehovah. We can imagine how happy he would have been then, if there had not been within or without the universe any such person as Jehovah. And if he had remained hidden for a long time, would not his children have come to believe that Jehovah after all did not exist ?

Peter knelt at Jesus' feet saying, "Lord depart from me, for I am a sinful man" (Luke 5:8). Since he knew Jesus to be Lord and himself to be a sinner, should he not instead have repented ? Why would he ask Jesus to depart ? Yes, we have all had this experience of both wanting the Lord and not wanting him. The Lord is what we want, yet he demands that we repent. If we are not willing to repent, if we are unwilling to pay the moral and spiritual price, we can only ask the Lord to leave us, and even wish that this kind of Master did not exist.

Belief in God sometimes becomes an opiate, that is true. But why cannot the refusal to believe in God also become an opiate? How many men have there been since the beginning of history who have drugged themselves by a denial of God's existence, so that they sin without any qualms, avoid responsibility, and stifle the reproaches of their conscience. Sometimes we meet people like this within our churches. They are morally reprobate, but refuse to repent, and the result is that having departed from God they gradually come to deny his existence. The only way they can recover their faith is first to repent of their sin.

## 2. *The Church's failure to manifest God*

Another reason why the world refuses to believe in God is the failure, the darkness, the sin of the churches. The Lord Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven". But actually it is just the opposite. From the life, the thinking, and the work of Christians, people are not able to see Christ's Father, full of love, justice, and purity. What men can see in the Church is instead a God whom their own sense of morality and justice does not allow them to believe in. This is an important reason why people today do not believe in God.

Let us quote some Western writers on this subject:

The well-known French Catholic writer, Jacques Maritain, in his *True Humanism* says, "What is the source of Communist atheism? It is that the Christian world was not true to its own principles, thus arousing the deep hostility of Communists, who then went on from hating the Christian world to hating Christianity itself."

Berdyaev, a Russian theologian of the Greek Orthodox Church, who moved to Paris after the October Revolution, in his book on *The Rise of the Russian Revolution*, writes as follows: "There are some Christians who condemn the Communists for their atheism and their anti-Church activities. But we must not place the main responsibility for this upon the shoulders of the Communists. Christians themselves must bear the larger part of the blame. Christians should be not only condemners and judges; we ought even more to be penitents. Have Christians in their social life tried very hard to put the principles of Christian justice into practice? We condemn the hatred and violence of the Communists. But have we avoided hatred and violence before? Have we put the ideals of Christian brotherhood into practice? The sins of Christians and of the historical Church have been very great, and they have brought a just punishment."

The Armenian Christian, Tiran Nersoyan, in his book, *A Christian View of Communism*, says : "Atheism was a necessary tool for the Communists to use in order to liberate the proletariat from the reactionary influence of the clergy and bring them into the revolution... Atheism was the most radical way of sweeping away the lack of fellowship between people of different religions and different religious sects."

We need not agree entirely with all the above quotations. But because of the sins of the Church, and especially because the Church in the field of politics was always on the side of the enemies of the people, the Church lost its ability to show forth God. This point is one which we in the Chinese Church can well appreciate. Now the Three Self Patriotic Movement has called the whole Church out of bondage to imperialism, which makes it a movement of great significance.

In their criticism of religion, people have unfortunately concentrated their attention on the evil results of religion in personal and social life, such as its inhibiting influence on civilization, its harmful effect on health, its upholding of private property, its sapping of the unity and strength of the people in their class struggle, its use by our enemies ; but they have not touched the substance of our faith. Some of the things criticized are foreign, and now a thing of the past, while others are Chinese in origin, and are still a problem. These should rouse us to greater vigilance and humble self-examination, amending what is wrong and strengthening what is right.

Today we should enter fully into the Three Self Patriotic Movement, purifying and rectifying the Church, to secure that the Church is never used for evil purposes which men abhor. Thus we shall obtain the conditions for witnessing to the substance of our faith — the truth of the Gospel.

#### *Faith and fellowship*

Fellow students, atheism has existed alongside the Church throughout its long history ; it is not something which the Church has just met within the last few years or the last few decades. We must not be alarmed ; we should recognize the right of all shades of atheism and agnosticism to exist ; we should become accustomed to living with them and learn how not to be influenced by them, while at the same time profiting by their criticism of religion, and learn how to present the Gospel to people who have been influenced by these theories. Theism and atheism are matters of faith, of our view of the world ; they are not matters of political strife. But there are some Western theologians who are trying to use this question as an instrument in the cold war, and this we do not approve

of. We know that neither cold war nor hot war will change an atheist into a theist. The Western Church has published many books on the subject of Christianity and Communism, but most of them are not of much value to us, because their authors have been too much influenced by the anti-Soviet, anti-Communist spirit of their own governments, so that they speak not with the loving spirit of an apostle but with the self-righteousness of the elder brother. We know that only as the Church rouses itself and rectifies itself and becomes really the Church, can the Gospel be set free by the strength of its own truth, and bring people to a knowledge of sin, repentance, and confession of Christ as Lord. To use the question of atheism and theism to foment civil disorder and further the cold war is a hopeless policy ; it can only do harm.

A nation or a government cannot be either theistic or atheistic. To believe in God or not is a matter of faith, and faith is a personal thing ; it does not pertain to a nation or a government. Note that the characters for "faith" (*hsinyang*) have a character for "man" on the left-hand side. That is because only an individual man can believe or not believe in God. Now a nation or a government is not a single individual ; it can neither believe in God nor not believe in God. We Christians must think deeper and not be unduly influenced because a nation has taken God as its banner<sup>1</sup>. We see that many of their government leaders take up the banner of religion and appear to be very devout, but their purpose is really to increase their own prestige and get support for their actions. They call their nation a Christian nation and their government a Christian government. But Christ has said that his kingdom is not of this world ; how then shall a nation or government dare to call itself by the name of Christian ? The true purpose of such boasting is simply to use the name of Christian to advance their own fortunes, to get glory in the eyes of the whole world, but the result is only to drag down the name of Christian until it is viewed with suspicion and even hated by the world. We know from history that those who make a pretence of religion all appear very devout. Even Herod who wanted to kill the Christchild in the manger pretended that he wanted to worship him. And we have seen only too many examples of how Herod's successors have cleverly used the cloak of religion to advance their wicked dreams of world imperialism. The Lord Jesus said, 'Not all who call me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven'. This is what we must never forget.

<sup>1</sup> Or perhaps "because a nation uses the name of God as a motto". (Translator's note.)

So we Christians must be wary, and not be taken in by any nation or government just because it uses the name of God as its banner. The question we should ask is not whether a nation is constantly talking about God, but whether its principles and policies are good, whether it really fulfils the responsibility that God demands of a nation. Only by weighing a nation by this rule can we avoid being deceived: only in this way can we judge factually and fairly. In regard to the political leadership of any nation, what we should ask is not, who is the leader? or what does he believe? but, what is the practical content of this leadership? Instead of concentrating on the religious faith of any leader, we should ask: "Do we approve the constitutional principles of this government?" and "How do the ruling party and the whole population join together to eliminate flaws and ensure that these principles are put into practice?" The Communists are atheists. But difference in belief does not prevent political unity. We do not approve of their atheism, but we welcome the Communist political leadership, and we welcome their clear frank attitude regarding questions of belief. They tell the world openly what they think about religion, and so there is no question of their trying to use religion: everything is straightforward and open and clear, not like the so-called Christian countries, where religion is made use of by hypocrites, so that questions become confused and the issue of right and wrong is not clear. Do you not agree with me?

Fellow students, the establishment of the Church in a socialist country is a task that was never accomplished in all the first nineteen centuries of church history. In self-government, self-support, and self-propagation we face a difficult responsibility. Why did the Lord give these duties to us and not to someone else? Is it because we are better? No, the Lord has his own purpose, one which we cannot fathom. But at least we know, just because our Chinese Church is weak and without antecedent prestige, that we can demonstrate how the Church of the Lord in weakness shows forth strength; we can show the workings of God's might, and thus bring glory to God. God has indeed chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame them that are wise, and the weak things to put to shame them that are strong. This shows that the strength is from God, and not from ourselves.

We have today been dealing with a number of questions concerning theism and atheism in their bearing on our witness for our Lord. I hope you will all consider these questions carefully, and see whether or not you agree with my presentation. I hope we shall all help each other and make progress together.

## United States Student YMCA Centennial 1958 - 1959

WILLIAM A. OVERHOLT

The academic year 1958-59 marks the centennial of the founding of the first Student YMCAs in the United States. Special observances of the centennial year were begun this spring in both the National Council of the YMCA and many state and area councils. Plans are made for widespread observance throughout the 300 local Associations and the intercollegiate movement during the coming year. One of the highlights of the year will be the National Student Assembly of the Student YMCA and YWCA at the University of Illinois at Christmas time.

The Intercollegiate Student YMCA in the United States represents one of the major historical roots of the World's Student Christian Federation.

The first Student "Ys" in America were organized in 1858 at the state universities in Virginia and Michigan. By 1877, twenty-five Student YMCAs responded to an invitation to convene with the National YMCA Convention at Louisville, Kentucky, where they voted into being the Intercollegiate YMCA as a department of the general YMCA movement. After Dwight L. Moody's successful evangelistic campaign in England, where he met with university communities, he invited American students to the first student summer conference at Northfield in 1886. It was in the midst of this conference that the Student Volunteer Movement was conceived. There was an early interchange of students between Great Britain and the United States in deputations and delegates to the Northfield Conferences.

The nature and dynamics of higher education in the United States in the latter third of the nineteenth century provided a ready environment for the growth of the Student YMCA (and YWCA). (1) Nearly all of the private colleges and universities were church-founded and officially church-sponsored. The Christian character of the institution was "guaranteed" by this church sponsorship, by the customary appointment of a minister as college president, and by required chapel. Given a classical concept of the educational process in formal student-faculty relations, it is easy to see that a voluntary, democratic, lay, student-controlled movement would

serve a genuine need. (2) The state universities were being organized and were flourishing. The churches were involved so deeply in the church-related schools that they became aware very slowly that larger and larger numbers of students for whom they had responsibility were not in the church colleges but in state schools instead. In this historic "gap" the YMCA and YWCA were practically the sole instruments of the Christian faith in these important institutions.

At the turn of the twentieth century, most student "Ys" were characterized by (1) a strong emphasis on personal religious life, including prayer, Bible study, and personal morality; (2) an extensive program of good works in the college community, which might include welcoming freshmen, teaching in Sunday school, managing a housing or employment bureau, etc.; and (3) a continuing concern for international fellowship and world evangelism.

Two American YMCA representatives were among those who gave powerful thrust and thorough preparation to the meeting at Vadstena Castle in Sweden when the World's Student Christian Federation was constituted in 1895. One was Luther Wishard, first national secretary of the Intercollegiate YMCA (1877) and later organizer of the American YMCA work in other countries. The other was John R. Mott, who attended the first Northfield Conference and then became National Student Secretary (1888).

Dr. Mott was selected General Secretary of the Federation, and was largely instrumental in organizing SCMs in many new lands in the course of his extended travels, so that the Federation became truly a World Federation.

There were voluntary religious societies in a number of American colleges prior to the organization of Student YMCAs, but they were by and large specialized interest groups in theological discussion, missions, etc. The Student YMCA became a focus for a comprehensive program of Christian concerns. The intercollegiate Student YWCA was aided to come into being by the YMCA; then the YMCA and YWCA were virtually the sole religious movements on American campuses until the 1920s, when there was a rapid extension of church student groups.

The nature of the Student YMCA in the 1920s and 1930s was transitional, attempting to define a creative Christian role in relation to trends of the times. Some of these trends might be summarized: (1) the growth of attention to the social gospel, to which were related racial, labour, and peace concerns; (2) the increasing popularity of liberal theology in attempts to reach common ground with new educational, psychological, and sociological insights;

(3) the popular rejection of (and disillusionment in) the scheme of values prevailing prior to World War I; and (4) the expanding pluralism of Christian student groups. Since the middle thirties the intercollegiate program of the Student YMCA has been planned and conducted jointly with the Student YWCA. On a considerable number of local campuses there are co-educational Associations chartered by both the YMCA and YWCA.

During roughly the same period of the last twenty years in three "regions" in the Northeastern section of the country, there have been created Student Christian Movements jointly sponsored by some church boards and the YMCA and YWCA. In 1944 the "Y" movements strongly supported the organization of the United Student Christian Council as a national federation of student Christian movements, one of whose objects was to provide a wider base of American participation in the World's Student Christian Federation.

The voluntary, lay, non-denominational fellowship has been, and continues to be, a vital force in student life in the United States. The "Y" movements are well adapted to function within the milieu of campus life, and have had important direct and indirect influences on student personnel practices, and especially co-curricular activities.

Student YMCAs were hard hit by the depletion of the campuses during World War II, and there has been a continuing study of their role on the campus during the rebuilding period of the past twelve years. The "special contributions" they make on the campus today are summarized in the Centennial Manual as follows :

(1) One of these is to find fresh, creative ways to reach the large numbers of students who are not involved in any organized religious group. On most campuses these students number eighty per cent, or more.

(2) Another contribution is to provide opportunities for students from many different denominational backgrounds to work together in an association of persons joined together in a common purpose. This has been, and continues to be, a powerful experience of the meaning of Christian unity.

(3) Finally, students of other faiths as well as of no declared faith find in the YMCA a freedom to explore central questions of life purpose ; to come to know each other ; to study the meaning of the Christian faith ; and to work together in campus and community service and on major social concerns. Our world today, divided and culturally pluralistic, demands experiences like this for its very survival.

The Student YMCA in the United States, then, at the end of its first century is a vigorous movement in American colleges and universities. Campus units on more than three hundred campuses are actively related to and participating in the National Student Council and its nine regions. Local Associations employ about one

hundred and twenty-five professional staff, and a good proportion of those with staff also have buildings for program operations. The National Executive is the Rev. Bruce Maguire, and the headquarters staff includes a program secretary, a personnel secretary, an inter-racial and inter-cultural secretary, and at least one inter-collegiate staff member for each of the regional units.

A few of the major problems which confront all Christian groups on American campuses and which carry special implications for the Student YMCA are :

1. A pronounced drift towards cultural identification of the concerns of the Christian community with the ethos of the American way of life. This blurring of the incisive points where the Gospel is in tension with culture has the effect of consigning religion to that sector of life in which piety and fellowship are distinctive. The Gospel for the whole of life is too often lost, and the major struggles of personal and social life are dealt with in other contexts. Thus we have the curious paradox of the popularity of religion and at the same time its virtual ineffectiveness.

2. The knotty problems of the functional relationships of a lay non-denominational fellowship with the organized student movements of the churches continue. Even when and if the principles of relationships are defined, the provision of structures of organization and/or of experiences among students which have consistency with the principles is an extremely difficult task.

3. The rapid growth of non-Protestant constituencies (primarily Catholic and Jewish) within American colleges in the past two decades, along with their increasing sense of identification, is a relatively new factor. It is progressively more difficult for an inclusive Christian group to engage persons of Roman Catholic or Jewish tradition to participate. Interfaith relationships and organizations become increasingly important and formalized, even while the demand continues to keep attention on the vast majority who do not identify themselves with any religious organization on campus.

4. The recognition that voluntary student activities are an important factor in the total student educational experience has been thoroughly accepted by administrators of American higher education. Not only are administrative staff appointed to give guidance, coordination, and leadership to student activities in general, but a phenomenon of the last decade and a half has been the rapid growth of administratively appointed chaplains, directors of religious life, or coordinators of religious activities. The voluntary,

lay, student initiative concept requires analysis and evaluation in relation to such administrative patronage.

There is better recognition today that the best efforts of all groups are needed and that communication and coordination are essential than was true several years ago, but there is every indication that the challenge of the next century is not less than the last for creative and pioneering efforts in student religious life in the United States.

### Conrad Hoffmann's Contribution to the WSCF

European Student Relief, later called International Student Service, owes its existence to the initiative of Ruth Rouse, but it is largely thanks to Conrad Hoffmann that it became, at a time of great need, an outstanding relief enterprise among students.

Those of us who were active in the Federation at the close of the first World War and during the tragic years which followed it could never forget the passionate appeal made by Ruth Rouse on her return from a visit to Vienna in January, 1920:

It did not take twenty-four hours to realize that Vienna students were literally starving and that in the relief work carried on for the various sections of the Vienna community by the Friends, the Save the Children Fund and others, no provision was made for the students. Military Missions' offices were besieged by students — women students in particular — for employment as an alternative to selling their last remaining asset — themselves.

Her appeal, sent to every Movement in the Federation, met with a quick and generous response. Before the Beatenberg Conference — the first WSCF General Committee to be held after the war — \$35,000 had been contributed, including trucks of food and clothing, from SCMs all over the world. Ruth Rouse's act of faith was fully endorsed at Beatenberg, where a renewed appeal for \$1,000,000 was voted. Field representatives were appointed and Conrad Hoffmann called to become the Executive Secretary of European Student Relief. Relief was to be administered impartially, without regard to race, nationality, or creed, and with no other criterion than proven need: a totally new departure. It was also agreed that the Federation should welcome cooperation with other relief agencies.

Conrad Hoffmann's early history had prepared him in a peculiar way for what lay before him. German by birth, brought up in an

atmosphere of disbelief, he went to America, studied at Wisconsin University, specialized in Agricultural Bacteriology, and later did post-graduate work in Halle, Germany. Back in the United States, he found Christ through friends in the YMCA and soon became YMCA College Secretary at Kansas University. Early in the first World War the YMCA sent him to Germany to work among prisoners of war. He had to cut himself off from wife, child, and country, and up until November, 1918, was one of the few people, and the only American, permitted to carry on work with prisoners of war in Germany. I was doing similar work occasionally in England, and I remember with what respect and admiration his ministry was regarded.

From 1920 to 1926, Conrad Hoffmann devoted his great ability and his whole heart to the new and difficult task of directing European Student Relief, insuring its needed expansion into Germany, Poland, and Hungary and even introducing it into Soviet Russia where, in 1921, famine had forced universities to close their doors. Thousands of Russian students were fed; large numbers of destitute Russian and other refugee students in or from Central Europe were rescued; help was extended to Balkan students, especially in Greece after the débâcle in Asia Minor in 1922. ESR also shared in meeting the urgent needs of students in Japan after the earthquake of 1923. Thus year after year, ESR continued under the wise leadership of Conrad Hoffmann, adjusting its services to changing needs in hundreds of university centres.

With Conrad Hoffmann as its guiding spirit, ESR not only helped meet the physical needs of students, but also preserved their self-respect and stimulated self-help. It proved to be a rare experience of solidarity between students from receiving and giving countries and a witness to applied Christian love.

In 1927, Conrad Hoffmann was called to devote his gifts and experience to "foreign students" in America, and later to initiate and conduct as Secretary of the International Missionary Council the delicate task of Christian Approach to the Jews. His death, on August 15, 1958, has been felt as a great loss by all those who have been his friends and fellow-workers. They remember with gratitude his simple and clear Christian witness, his open and joyful expression, his love never at a loss, his winning convictions. He had, in a rare way, imaginative power and sensitive understanding of different national and racial mentalities. His life has been a true illustration of a man won by Christ who lived to be true to his call.

H.-L. HENRIOD.

# LATIN AMERICAN TRAVEL DIARY

T. V. PHILIP

After my travel in the Middle East<sup>1</sup> I attended the International Missionary Council Assembly in Ghana, and then visited some of the countries in West Africa, including Liberia where I attended the West African Leadership Training Conference of the YMCA at Monrovia. I had to leave before it was over in order to be at the WSCF Leadership Training Conference in Peru.

From Dakar I had about a twelve-hour flight to Brazil where Paulina Steffen, Barbara Hall, and Edmond (Nat) Knox Sherrill met me at the São Paulo airport. In the evening I met some of the leaders of the Brazilian SCM at a Chinese restaurant. The great news I heard on my arrival in Latin America was that the dictator, Perez Gimenez of Venezuela, had been overthrown by the revolution in Caracas.

The next morning I left for Peru. Flying over the famous Andes range was an exciting experience. Some of the North Americans on the same plane were very busy taking photographs for the folks at home! Mauricio Lopez, who had arrived earlier, was at the Lima airport, and greeted me in Spanish, "Buenas tardes". I was very happy to meet him again, as I had not seen him for a long time.

## *Peru — Llamaland*

The llama is the symbol of Peru; Lima is the capital. Compared to Rio, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires, it is small, but it is really beautiful. The WSCF Leadership Training Conference was held at the Methodist Training School in Callao, about seven miles outside of Lima.

Peru has a population of five million. Of these, about forty-five per cent is pure Indian, about forty per cent is mixed, the majority of the remaining fifteen per cent is of European stock, and a small minority is Chinese and Japanese. The economy of the country is based on agriculture, petroleum, and minerals. It is the fourth largest silver-producing area in the world, and the largest in Latin America. There is a variety of foreign enterprises in Peru, as in many other Latin American countries.

<sup>1</sup> See *The Student World*, No. 3, 1958.

There are five universities in Peru: two in Lima (one of them Roman Catholic), and one each in Trujillo, Arequipa, and Cusco. San Marco University in Lima, founded in 1551, is the oldest university in the Americas. I had an opportunity to visit it, and was very happy at the cordial welcome I received from the university authorities. It has several faculties and is considered to be independent of the state. There are various student organizations, and I was told that the majority of students have no use for religion and are anti-clerical in their attitudes. I saw at the entrance to the university placards and notices put up by the students demanding more participation in the university government. The Protestant student community in Peru is very small, not more than one hundred in all the universities. We have no organized SCM, but I was pleased to see the interest of the church leaders and the students in developing a good student movement, and we may hope that, as a result of the recent Leadership Training Conference, a good SCM may emerge in the future.

### *Bolivia*

We have a SCM in La Paz, with a membership of about thirty, and although the Movement is small, I was very happy with its program and activities and the respect it enjoys among the university students. Ivan Guzman, who was at the meeting of the WSCF General Committee at Tutzing, plays an important role in the life of the Movement at La Paz.

My stop in Bolivia was very short. Due to bad weather we tried three times before we were finally able to land at the La Paz airport. It is at an altitude of 13,400 feet above sea level, the highest commercial airport in the world. La Paz, the commercial, industrial, and educational capital of Peru, is a beautiful city, with its landscaped gardens and avenues, and is considered to be wealthy. Much of the world's tin and other minerals comes from this area and it is also an important source of quinine.

About eighty per cent of Bolivia's population is Indian. They live in the mountains, the Altiplano (Highland), and it is very interesting to see how they cultivate the sheer sides of the mountains. It is usually said that the Indians of Bolivia look very sad, but when I was there they were having a fiesta, and many came down from the mountains to the city, dancing through the streets, singing and throwing coloured water on each other. Most of them are uneducated, and socially and economically backward, and only recently have some come down to the plains. A country which

was once theirs now belongs to others. Now the government and some private agencies are trying to help these people. The Methodist Church, which is the major Protestant denomination working in Bolivia, has done extensive work among them.

I spent two days in Cochabamba, another university centre in Bolivia. At the Officers' meeting which I attended when I first arrived in Geneva in 1955 to join the Federation staff, I heard Valdo Galland speaking a great deal about Cochabamba, and I thought he was talking about his wife! Only later did I learn that he was speaking of a conference held there! I was keen to visit it, and I was not disappointed. It is a beautiful city, with a warm and pleasant climate, an ideal place for a conference.

We have no organization in Cochabamba, but there is a small group of Protestant students meeting at the YMCA. There is also a youth group of the Methodist Church in which some of the university students participate. They were having a weekend conference at the Methodist school when I was there, and I was able to meet some of them.

### *Argentina*

In Argentina I visited Buenos Aires, Córdoba, Rosario, and Mendoza. We have no organized national SCM in Argentina, but there are groups of students meeting in all these cities, and possibilities for developing a good SCM. In fact, the students themselves are taking the initiative in this matter in several places. The church leaders whom I met also expressed their desire and concern for student work. I was also happy about the growing desire for unity and cooperation among students of different denominations.

I attended two conferences in Argentina, one at Cordoba, organized by the WSCF, and one at San Juan of the Baptist youth group. (This group is related to the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States.) About 250 young people were at the Baptist conference, and Mauricio and I were very much impressed by the warm welcome we were given. Our meeting with some of the leaders of the Baptist Church was also an inspiration for us.

In Buenos Aires I stayed at the Faculty of Theology, under the care of José Miguez, an outstanding theologian of Latin America, and the editor of *Testimonium*. In Mendoza I stayed in Mauricio's home, where his mother took special care of me and made me feel completely at home. I would also like to mention my visit with the pastor of the Plymouth Brethren Church in Mendoza, who invited me to speak to his congregation.

*Chile*

Here again I spent most of my time at a conference of the SCM, at El Tabo, one of the most beautiful seashores in Latin America. Donald Wilson, the General Secretary of the SCM, and Dr. Raimundo Valenzuela, known to many in the ecumenical movement, gave leadership to the conference. I was also able to visit the student groups in Concepción, Santiago, and Valparaiso. In Concepción, in addition to the SCM meeting, I also attended a meeting of young people of different confessions (Presbyterians, Methodists, Lutherans, Salvation Army, Southern Baptists, Pentecostals, etc.), and the church was packed.

*Uruguay*

My next stop was in Montevideo. Here I participated in a conference for students at Las Flores, near Montevideo, organized on the initiative of Julio de Santa Ana and Dr. Sanchez. Although the group was small, it was a good conference. I also had an opportunity to meet some church leaders like Luis Odell, secretary of the River Plate Christian Council, and Emilio Castro, a Methodist pastor and an outstanding preacher.

The SCM in Uruguay is small but active, with work also among high school boys and girls. They are thinking of appointing a full-time secretary for student work.

*Brazil*

Although I had planned earlier to spend a month in Brazil, I had to cut short my time there in order to be at the WSCF Executive Committee meeting in Oxford. I spent four days in Porto Alegre, mostly at a conference of the SCM, arranged by Rev. Karl Ernst Neisel, the Secretary of the SCM, to allow me to meet the students. Here again I was happy to find the serious concern of the students to play their role in the life and mission of the Church.

I stopped in Rio de Janeiro for only one day, but I had an opportunity to meet Barbara Hall, the SCM Secretary there, and to learn from her about her work in Rio and the life of the SCM in Brazil as a whole.

*General impressions*

My visit to South America was too short to permit me to make any considered remarks. It is a vast continent of which I could get only a superficial knowledge within two months. I wish I had had more time to spend in this part of the world.

When one reads in the newspapers about dictatorships and revolutions in Latin America, one is likely to get a wrong impression of the countries and the peoples. It is true that there are still dictatorships, revolutions, and political instability in certain countries, but when one comes to know the people, one realizes that they are really charming, peace loving, affectionate, and friendly. Students in various places were eager to teach me Spanish, but I could pick up only a few words like *muchas gracias, tengo mucha ambre*, and *adios*. The girls said that I should call them *bonitas*. It is true that they are really beauties, and this may be one of the reasons that some of the young North American missionaries in Latin America marry South American girls !

Outwardly Latin Americans may appear to be Westerners, but in their inner make-up I found them more like people in India : their sense of community, loyalty to the family, the spirit of hospitality, etc., are marvellous. I was struck by the interest they show in Asian and African countries, especially in India. I met at least two students who were very familiar with the writings of Indian political and religious leaders.

Like Asia and Africa, Latin America is passing through a period of social and political change. Dictatorship is over in many places ; it is beginning to shake in others. These countries have embarked on a new period in their history, and hence there are revolutions, changes, wars, and rumours of wars.

The economic situation is good and the standard of living high in many Latin American countries, especially compared to Asia. They do not face the tremendous population problem confronting Asia — in the whole of Latin America there are only about 180 million people, while India alone has a population of about 360 million. But the relatively small size of the social and economic problem does not in any way minimize its importance or depth. Latin American countries are involved in a social revolution. In the past their resources were wasted by the dictators or ruthlessly exploited by outsiders. Even now there is economic oppression in many countries, but during recent years the ordinary men and women have awakened to their historical mission and destiny, and they are demanding their share in the economic goods and in the life of the nation and the world at large.

#### *Latin America in search of its individuality*

What struck me most was not the revolutionary or social or political changes (although these are very significant) but some of the questions which are behind these problems, and which are faced

consciously or unconsciously by the university students and intellectuals. Many students asked me why Latin American countries are not taken seriously by people in other parts of the world ; why people in Asia or Africa do not know much about Latin America, while Latin Americans know many things, for example, about India. I had to tell them, "Unless you express your individuality, how can you be known?", and they readily agreed that this is exactly the problem they face at present : they want to know who they are. In international politics these countries very often do not express themselves, but only follow the policy of the United States State Department. In the economic field they are either exploited by dictators or by people from outside. Latin Americans want to be themselves, and they are trying to discover their own individuality, or rather to shape it and express it. In this attempt they are frustrated by interference from outside and from within, by dictators with foreign support. Hence the revolutions and fighting in certain places, and anti-American feeling among the youth. It is easy to label these people as communist, or pro-communist. But to my mind the problem is neither communism nor anti-communism, but arises out of a frustration in their search for individuality, which may take different forms, sometimes anti-Americanism.

While waiting for a plane at Salta in Argentina I talked to a small group of Argentinians, two of whom showed me books they were reading, one the life of Gandhi, the other the life of Vinobha. I need not say how happy I was to see that they were reading about the lives of two of our great Indian leaders. One of them told me that the book about Vinobha was the most exciting he had ever read. Why should a book about Gandhi or Vinobha be so exciting ? Is it their political or spiritual achievements ? Surely these are exciting, but what is more important is that they reflect the Indian mind, that which is truly Indian, and that is what excited the Argentinian at the airport.

#### *Latin American culture*

The cultural life of Latin America is still, as many told me, in its infancy. They are neither Europeans nor North Americans, but at the same time have many things in common with them, at least on the surface of social life. Why has democracy not taken root in some Latin American countries ? Is it because the people are poor and illiterate, or because of lack of leadership ? I doubt it. I asked these questions myself, and I heard students asking, and trying to answer, them. Some said, "We lack a cultural basis for our social life." Can democracy grow without a cultural ethos ? Is it enough to

have a democratic constitution and parliamentary elections ? In fact, it is easy for a dictator to manipulate an election for his own ends by showing favouritism to some powerful section of the community. I was told that dictators spend large amounts of money to gain the support of the labouring classes. I was astonished to hear that the major support for Peron in Argentina came from the labour group and the industrial class, who in turn were favoured by him. Democracy is not merely a form or system of government, but a way of life undergirded by a culture. Unless the people are emotionally involved in building up democracy, with the necessary national discipline, it is doomed to fail.

The changes taking place in the social and cultural life of these countries pose various problems. Natural and human resources are to a large extent already there. The rapid development of large cities (Buenos Aires has a population of five million) and industries has brought with it social and moral problems. All this demands a change in the structure of government, social and economic planning, and above all the shaping of an integrated culture which will provide the necessary moral and spiritual basis for the rapid social and political changes. Has the Christian Gospel any relevance for this situation ?

#### *The churches in Latin America*

Latin America has a population of about 180 million. It is estimated that, of these, five million belong to various Protestant groups. The majority of the people are supposed to be Roman Catholics. This does not in any way prove that Latin America is Christian and that a majority of the people are Christians. In Lima I was told that more than fifty per cent of the ten thousand students in San Marco University have no use for Christianity. I myself met several students who told me that they are non-Christians though they come from a Roman Catholic background. Many of the *élite* are looking outside Christianity and the Christian Church for a faith which will give meaning and coherence to their life in the present-day world. Neither the Roman church nor the Protestant churches are very successful in satisfying the spiritual hunger of these people. If the life of Vinobha (a non-Christian in India) can excite a well-educated person in Argentina and challenge him to rethink his life, could not the Christian Gospel be made as exciting to people like him ?

In such a situation it is easy for the Roman church to try to propagate a culture which has no indigenous roots among the people, or an economic and social system which does not take into account

the real situation ; it is easy for the Protestant churches to try to escape completely from all these cultural and social questions, or to remain as pockets of North American or European culture, out of touch with the problems which the people face, or to minimize the gravity of the situation by trying to solve it at the level of certain moral standards. Can the missionary enterprise in Latin America be satisfied with teaching English to young people, or running social service projects ? Of course, social service has its own validity and justification, but the social and political problems facing millions of people cannot be dealt with at this level.

Several members of the SCM from a Roman Catholic background told me that they could not find a home in either the Roman church or the Protestant churches. This is the serious question we face in the SCM. Can the Protestant community find its motive for evangelism in the corruption of the Roman church ? Is it enough to de-Romanize the young people and leave them up in the air ? In Bolivia I was told that many of the children coming to Protestant schools automatically leave the Roman church (or are forced to leave it) but few of them become Protestants. This again raises serious questions for the work of the Protestant churches, and I know that many Protestant leaders are giving them serious thought. I do not think that the answer can be found in the "warmth of the Evangelical faith", or by escaping into an obsolete and narrow dogmatic position, as do some Roman Catholics. Cultural, social, and political problems cannot be dealt with on the basis of Roman Catholicism versus Protestantism, or traditionalism versus Evangelicalism.

I say these things as one who is existentially involved in such a situation and not as a critic. The social and cultural situation in Latin America and the tremendous task which the Church is facing there are very similar to those confronting us in Asia. In one sense the question which the Church faces in Latin America (as in Asia and Africa) is a theological question. We are called to proclaim the good news to all men, to all institutions, and to all situations, but this must be done in a way people really understand, so that they will change their lives and the life of society. This demands a new understanding of the Gospel itself and its relevance to the life of man.

During my stay in South America, I felt constantly the importance of the presence in these countries of the Protestant churches, even though small in size. They must carry forward the task God has given them, knowing what they are called to do, and not merely

taking a defensive position. Like the churches in Asia and Africa, they face the serious problem of the disunity of the Protestant church. All the denominations which have their origins in Europe and North America are to be found in Latin America. But I was extremely glad to find a new understanding and cooperation existing in some places, and beginning to appear in others. In Concepción in Chile, all the Christian groups, not only the major denominations but also the various small groups, cooperated in arranging a youth meeting when I was there. This desire for cooperation and unity is found mainly in youth and student activities, and one can only hope that it will strengthen the Church in Latin America. It is only one of the encouraging signs in the life of the Church. A new understanding of the task of the Church is beginning to appear; I saw it among students in various conferences I attended. Above all, I was fortunate to meet many able and enthusiastic young church leaders from whom I learned a great deal, and who may be the hope of the Church in Latin America. I was told that Union Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires has played an important part in shaping this leadership. It is to be hoped that such good seminaries will be started in other parts of Latin America (for example, in Brazil) instead of each denomination starting its own seminary without adequate staff and facilities.

#### *The task of the ecumenical movement*

The task of the ecumenical organizations may be to give these people the necessary assistance in their work and to help them to come together to consider their common problems and to plan for the future, rather than to make plans, as often happens, in New York or Geneva. This common planning and sharing should be done in an ecumenical setting in the fellowship of the churches throughout the world, for the problems we face and the task given to us are common to all of us. As in the past, the Federation may have to play here a pioneering role. It was Federation conferences in various parts of Latin America which created a new awareness of the task of the Church there, and also gave opportunities for young leaders to come together. The Federation must continue the work which it has undertaken, helping students in their Christian life and witness, and also preparing young leadership for the Church, being conscious all the time that our task lies within the total task of the Church in Latin America.

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

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### **Suggested Bibliography on Christianity and Ancient Religions**

Any list of books in this field will be necessarily unsatisfactory and incomplete: more so since the selection is limited to books in English. The world of traditional and historical religions is vast and wide. In this list emphasis is laid on books dealing with Asia, and especially Hinduism and Buddhism. Africa, and tribal religions of primitive culture are not referred to. This is another serious limitation. But the intention is really to provide student readers with a list of books which will encourage them to explore further on their own in this field, if they are interested.

To begin with it would be helpful to get to know the historical situation which has contributed to the renascence of historical and traditional religions. A few books are suggested for this purpose.

**ASIA AND WESTERN DOMINANCE.** K. M. Panikkar, London, Allen & Unwin, 1953.

A critical account, from the Asian viewpoint, of the ruthless nature of Western colonialism, which in non-Christian opinion is deliberately connected with the work of Christian missions.

**SOUTHEAST ASIA, CROSSROADS OF RELIGION.** K. P. Landon, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1949.

Especially illuminating reference to animistic forms of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam as potent factors in the situation.

**CHRISTIANITY AND THE ASIAN REVOLUTION.** R. B. Manikam, New York, Friendship Press, 1954.

Documented description of the present state of the churches in Asian lands, in the context of their new environment, setting forth the challenges and opportunities confronting Asian Christians.

**THE MEETING OF EAST AND WEST.** F. S. C. Northrop, New York, Macmillan, 1946.

Sincere attempt at world understanding, on the assumption that the cultures of the Orient and the Occident are meeting, and that the task ahead is to work out this meeting so that the values of each civilization complement and reinforce rather than combat and destroy those of the other.

**AN HISTORIAN'S APPROACH TO RELIGION.** Arnold Toynbee, Oxford University Press, 1956.

Endorses the comment made long ago by Symmachus, "The heart of so great a mystery cannot ever be reached by following one road only". As a plea for informed understanding of other faiths it challenges attention, but as a justification for abandoning or even modifying the Christian mission it is not convincing.

**EAST AND WEST — SOME REFLECTIONS.** S. Radhakrishnan, London, Allen and Unwin, 1956.

In lectures delivered recently in McGill University, Radhakrishnan sees the hope for religion in the future with "the small minorities who see beyond the horizons of their particular faith, who believe that religious fellowship is possible, not through the imposition of any one way on the whole world but through an all-inclusive recognition that we are all searchers for the truth". This is the crux of the matter for Christian faith, and the current need is to state the Christian position in regard to this claim.

We cannot fully appreciate the contemporary significance and tremendous vitality of renascent religions unless we are acquainted with their historical development and principal doctrines. There are several text books which deal with world religions.

**FAITHS MEN LIVE BY.** J. C. Archer, New York, Ronald Press, 1934.

Embodies the long experience of a teacher in this field who was greatly respected, always anxious to present an objective account of other faiths, stressing the dynamic hold they have on people today in spite of centuries of traditional history. The treatment is in some places out of date now, but in no sense misleading.

**THE GREAT RELIGIONS OF THE MODERN WORLD.** E. J. Jurji, Princeton University Press, 1947.

A symposium by outstanding scholars in various religions which attempts to give fresh insight in regard to their significance as living influences in our modern world.

LIVING RELIGIONS OF THE WORLD. Frederick Spielgalberg, New York, Prentice Hall, 1956.

In some ways better planned as an introduction to the study of religions, brought up to date in information and attitude, perhaps best suited for class-room use.

COMPARATIVE RELIGION. A. C. Bouquet, London, Penguin Books, 1942.

Readable account meant for those who seek to be informed about the religions of mankind ; lucid and scholarly, with pleasant touches of anecdotal humour.

More recently, in order to meet a felt need, representative scholars who are acknowledged authorities in their field have been persuaded to write (or rewrite) popular accounts of the beliefs and practices of world religions. Some of these monographs are exceedingly good and published in cheap editions. Among them the following titles may be found helpful. They are uniformly good. Although written in most cases, not all however, by those who are not adherents of the religion concerned, they are all written with studied objectivity and unprejudiced concern.

ISLAM. Alfred Guillaume, London, Penguin Books, 1954.

MOHAMMEDANISM. H. A. R. Gibb, New York, A Mentor Book, 1955.

HINDUISM THROUGH THE AGES. D. S. Sarma, Bombay, Bharat Vidya Bhavan, 1956.

BUDDHISM. Christmas Humphreys, London, Penguin Books, 1951.

Attention may be also drawn to a series of valuable introductory studies in the series entitled *Great Religions of the East*, London, Epworth Press. Published some years ago, they continue to be useful as descriptive accounts of the scriptures, the principal teachings, and outline history of each religion. Commendable in this series are *Outline of Hinduism* by F. Harold Smith ; *The Dawn of Religion* by Eric S. Waterhouse ; *Zoroastrianism* by J. W. Waterhouse, and *Shintoism* by A. C. Underwood.

In this connection student readers may find attractive the series on religions which appeared in consecutive numbers of *Life* magazine during 1955. They are popular presentations, profusely illustrated, and based on reliable scholarship. These articles have since been

reprinted in book form (Chicago, Time, Inc.) and make interesting reading.

First-hand acquaintance with the scriptures of various religions is not possible to most people, for the simple reason that they are written in different languages. But there are good translations in English. The more erudite and specialized ones are not here listed. The Mentor Religious Classics series are generally good in introducing this vast treasure house of the sacred books of the East. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* by M. M. Pickthall, a British Moslem, contains, besides a good translation, an historical introduction and commentary. *The Way of Life* is a new translation by R. B. Blakney of *Tao Te King*, presenting the philosophy of Taoism. In *Teaching of the Compassionate Buddha*, E. H. Burtt has collected the best translations of the basic texts in Buddhism. *Hindu Scriptures* by Nicol Macnicol, London, Everyman's Library, 1948, is a good anthology. But a careful reading of *The Bhagavadgita*, translated with explanatory notes by W. D. P. Hill, Oxford University Press, 1953, is perhaps the best way of getting acquainted with one of the most challenging non-Christian scriptures.

Reading a few of the books listed so far would enable a student to apprehend with intelligent interest the significance and contemporary relevance of the nascent forms of the classical religions of Asia today. Inspired by national self-respect, albeit profoundly influenced by Western philosophic concepts and social theories; reacting to the impact of modern technology and science and, more than all, responding violently to the work of Christian missions: these factors have all contributed to this resurgence.

MODERN TRENDS IN ISLAM. H. A. R. Gibb, Chicago University Press, 1947.

Helpful introduction to changes within Islam, dealing with what then were undercurrents, and which since have found manifest expression in Moslem lands.

THE RENAISSANCE OF HINDUISM. D. S. Sarma, Benares, Hindu University Press, 1944.

A very thorough investigation of modern movements, and enthusiastic evaluation of contributions made by men like Ram Mohan Roy, Aurobindo Ghose, Gandhi, and Radhakrishnan. The total interpretation is biased by the Vedantic convictions of the author.

**THE RELIGION OF THE HINDUS.** K. W. Morgan, New York, Ronald Press, 1952.

**THE PATH OF THE BUDDHA.** K. W. Morgan, New York, Ronald Press, 1956.

Edited by an American scholar, the various chapters in these two books are, however, written by Asian authorities so as to ensure an authentic presentation of the varying traditional theories and practices of these two great religions of Asia, as they now influence and direct the living and thinking of millions of their adherents. Here, in a sense, is Asia interpreting herself to the West, for both these volumes are primarily intended for the Western reader.

**HINDU SOCIETY AT THE CROSS-ROADS.** K. M. Panikkar, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1955.

An interesting self-analysis of modern Hindu society in the grips of a revolution, which Panikkar would work out in terms of modern concepts, as he maintains, somewhat wishfully, that religion and society in Hinduism are unrelated. Any state legislation to reform society cannot affect Hinduism.

**CHRISTIAN MISSIONS.** M. K. Gandhi, Ahmedabad, Navajivan Press, 1941.

Collection of magazine articles, speeches, and interviews given by Mahatma Gandhi on the question of Christian missions and their future. Gandhiji's attitude to Christian missions is representative of the stand that is taken by most religious leaders in Asia generally; and, therefore, Christians need to know just why non-Christians in Asia oppose Christian missions.

**FACING A RENAISSANCE.** S. Kulandran, Calcutta, YMCA Publishing House, 1957.

Deals with the renaissance of Hinduism, Theravadin Buddhism, and Islam. In the closing chapter Kulandran outlines the Christian approach to non-Christian religions, and suggests practical methods of significance for the contemporary evangelist.

At the heart of the Christian faith is the constraint of the conviction that God in Christ has initiated a redemptive process in creation, and that those who believe in this and constitute his people are also involved in this grand mission. This great calling wherewith

we are called, then, commissions us to proclaim the Gospel to those of other faiths. Recent literature about this missionary concern in non-Christian religions is somewhat heavy reading, but it is immensely rewarding to study some of these books and to ponder over what they have to say, if we are to form our own points of view.

**THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE IN A NON-CHRISTIAN WORLD.** H. Kraemer, London, Edinburgh House Press, 1938.

A classic in that it initiated and kept alive what has come to be described as the Tambaram debate centring around the issue of whether Christianity fulfils the hopes and aspirations of non-Christian faith. Is there a continuity or discontinuity?

**RELIGION AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH.** H. Kraemer, London, Lutterworth Press, 1956.

In this later volume, Kraemer reaffirms his position that biblical revelation — which is not the same as empirical Christianity — is not to be regarded as religion which is of the nature of culture, nor with philosophy which is based on reason. The revelation of Christ is God's self-disclosure which is *sui generis*. It brings the judgement of truth on claims of other systems.

**THE GOSPEL AND OTHER FAITHS.** E. C. Dewick, London, Canterbury Press, 1948,

**THE CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO OTHER RELIGIONS.** E. C. Dewick, Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Indicates by pointed reference to prevailing trends in non-Christian faiths (which would include current challenging political-philosophical systems) the need for a sympathetic approach which would transcend dogmatic polemics in a spirit of loving concern and appreciative reverence — without compromising Christian belief in the Incarnation.

**RELIGIOUS TRUTH AND THE RELATION BETWEEN RELIGIONS.** D. G. Moses, Madras, C. L. S., 1950.

Based on a twofold enquiry by an eminent Indian Christian thinker : to discover the special characteristics of truth as it is understood and applied in religion ; and to examine views of Radhakrishnan, Hocking, and Kraemer on the cognitive relation which religions bear to each other.

**THE CHRISTIAN MESSAGE TO THE HINDU.** A. G. Hogg, London, SCM Press, 1947.

Out of his long missionary experience dealing with Hindu intellectuals, Dr. Hogg pleads for the presentation of the Christian Gospel with a challenging relevancy, concentrated at key positions so as to meet the hearer at some point of spiritual need.

**ETERNAL LIFE — NOW.** D. T. Niles, Calcutta, YMCA, 1953.

The well-known Asian evangelist shows that effective penetration of Buddhist religious thought categories is possible by explaining how the religious terms which both the Christian and the Buddhist employ have widely differing meaning content.

**ISLAM AND THE GOSPEL OF GOD.** H. Spencer, Madras, SPCK, 1956.

A simple, categoric statement of the basic difference in concepts, although the theological vocabulary used by Muslims and Christians is often deceptively similar.

**THE CALL OF THE MINARET.** Kenneth Cragg, New York, Oxford University Press, 1956.

After presenting the main historical and doctrinal aspects of the Muslim faith and modern efforts to relate it to current social and economic thought, Dr. Cragg indicates what is really at stake between the two faiths, and proceeds to examine and evaluate a new pattern in Muslim-Christian relations against a background of twentieth-century changes and tensions.

**A FAITH FOR THE NATIONS.** C. W. Forman, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1957.

Seeks to show how the relevance of the Christian faith can be established from within the human situation, if one truly understands that situation and truly understands the Christian faith.

**THE UNFINISHED TASK.** S. Neill, London, Lutterworth Press, 1957.

Powerful plea in the author's inimitable style that the Church realistically confront the Unfinished Task. A recovery of the sense of urgency is vital — what God has achieved through a large, disobedient Church could be an indication of the possibilities ahead... in these times of crisis and opportunity.

P. D. DEVANANDAN.

JESUS AND HIS COMING, by J. A. T. Robinson. SCM Press, London, 1957. 15s.

We were already indebted to Dr. Robinson for a significant contribution to the discussion of Christian eschatology with the publication in 1950 of his book, *In the End, God*. As he says in the introduction of the book under review, he there "made a first attempt to bridge the gulf between the New Testament conception of the Last Things and the outlook of the twentieth century". But, though he stands by the interpretation given to the doctrine in the earlier work, he believes it to have been based on the inadequate assumption that "it is possible to accept the New Testament teaching about the Second Coming more or less as it stands and then to build upon it". This assumption, shared by most other contemporary scholars who seek to interpret in the thought forms of today the biblical teaching concerning the Second Advent, must be challenged. For when one attempts, as Dr. Robinson does in this book, to probe with all the apparatus of critical scholarship into the origins of biblical thought concerning the Second Coming of Christ, he is bound to come to some rather surprising conclusions. This is particularly so of the answer to the question whether the Church's expectation of Jesus was shared by Jesus himself. "The Church expected Jesus: what did Jesus expect? The problem before us is the relation between the two."

With a wealth of scholarship and critical acumen that must win the respect of any reader, Dr. Robinson applies the historical method to the New Testament writings to discover just when the doctrine of the Second Advent arose in the thinking of the Church. There can be no doubt that the Parousia hope, "the expectation of the coming of Christ from heaven to earth in manifest and final glory", is written large on the pages of the New Testament. But the author is forced to come to the conclusion that neither in the teaching of Jesus nor in the most primitive teaching of the Church is any such expectation to be found. There is eschatological thinking in both these sources. But it is "proleptic" and "inaugurated" eschatology, and not the kind of "futurist" eschatology represented by later Parousia expectation.

"Proleptic" eschatology is the term the author thinks it best to apply to the interpretation of the situation within the lifetime of Jesus "to indicate that while the kingdom comes in power, and the hour of the Son of man arrives, only with the death of Jesus, yet the signs of the messianic age are already seen, in anticipation, 'before the time' (Matt. 8: 29) in his words and deeds". "Inaugurated"

eschatology he believes to be the best term for "relating that hour to the future and to the final consummation of God's purpose... For at that hour *all* is inaugurated, yet *only* inaugurated. From then on that through which in the end the world must be saved or condemned comes finally into history : thenceforward men are in the presence of the eschatological event and the eschatological future" (p. 101).

Although the teaching of Jesus, and the most primitive teaching of the early Church, bear witness only to such an eschatology as the foregoing, it is evident that already by the time of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians the idea of a Second Coming of Christ, separated in time from the first coming, and needed to complete God's deed of redemption, is found in as complete a form as ever to be found in the New Testament. Where did such a conception come from and why did it arise ?

Dr. Robinson finds that the doctrine emerged in the transition from eschatological to apocalyptic forms of thought in the early Church. The reasons for this transition are complex. In the first instance the early Church experienced a moment of hesitancy in answering the question whether Jesus was the Christ who had come or whether he was the Christ who was yet to come. In the passage Acts 3 : 13-26 Jesus is thought of simply as the Christ who is yet to come. The Christ-event has not yet taken place. But this was an eschatology which had no future in the Church. It was rejected in favour of the "realized" eschatology of Acts 2. Jesus was held to be indeed the Christ who had already come. But when the Messianic claims made by Jesus, and on behalf of Jesus, were measured by the Old Testament apocalyptic expectations for the Messianic age, there seemed to be details of hope not yet fulfilled. So the idea arose of another "coming" which would complete the first ; the initial unity of eschatological hope and fulfilment found in Jesus' teaching was broken up into a duality. The Christ-event, instead of being completely fulfilled, in the sense of being wholly inaugurated though yet to be fully realized, was regarded to be still as much in the future as in the past. "The messianic act was now, as it were, half-way through."

It is this broken unity which must be restored in the Church's thinking about Christ as the Coming One. And here the Gospel of John is of the greatest assistance. For in it past and future are held together in the evangelist's witness to the eschatological present — the Presence of Christ.

We are indeed grateful to Dr. Robinson for this scholarly work, fascinating in detail and convincing in argument so far as it goes. But certain of the presuppositions and conclusions of the author

must be called into question, provided we understand him aright ; for we are warned by him that he expects to be misunderstood.

It would seem to this reviewer that the author errs in his initial premise that the teaching of Jesus, as historically verified, carries an authority which the apostolic witness to the Christ does not in itself bear. Valid theology would seem to be but the recital and expansion of what the historical Jesus taught. The *ipsissima verba* of Jesus tend to be regarded as the final court of appeal in determining what is authentic Gospel. In one place the author speaks of Jesus' teaching as the "cream of the Gospel" (p. 100), and in another place he asks whether a certain point of view reflects "merely the thinking of the Church or that of Jesus as well" (p. 52). There does seem to be in all of this the hint of a return to what is generally regarded now as the invalid distinction between the Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel about Jesus. Surely the apostolic witness to revelation is not limited to the explication and interpretation of the teachings of Jesus. Must we not rather affirm that in the total witness of the Church the spirit of the risen Christ, and not simply the teaching of the historical Jesus, is the subject as well as the object of revelation ?

The second point of criticism has to do with the way in which the author seeks to resolve the tension, indeed the divergence, between Jesus' own eschatological expectations and those of the Church concerning him. In the case of Jesus the eschatological expectation had to do with the crisis introduced into history by his earthly ministry and with the vindication and judgement inherent in his death and resurrection, whereas for the Church the crisis was projected into an imminent but ever-receding future. The author seeks for a resolution of these diverging points of view by denying the "event" character of the New Testament witness to the Second Coming of Christ. If in accordance with the teaching of Jesus everything has been consummated in the first coming of the Christ, nothing of eschatological significance can happen which has not already taken place. The Christ has been vindicated, his glory revealed ; God has already visited man in final judgement and redemptive grace. All that remains is the outworking of this fully inaugurated eschatology towards its completion in perfect appropriation. "There is but one coming, begun at Christmas, perfected on the Cross, and continuing till all are included in it... There is but one coming from God and to God" (p. 185).

This rejection of the "event" character of what is witnessed to in the myth of the Second Coming leads the author to think and speak in terms of "process". "There are not two events, but one

single once and for all event inaugurating a process" (p. 169). Can this mean anything other than the gradual victory of God over evil in history in the power of the risen Christ? If so there is much both in history and in scripture which would contend against such a view.

In brief, the writer of this review finds it necessary to take the "event" idea contained in the New Testament witness to the "Second Coming" with genuine seriousness. The radical difference that exists in biblical eschatology between the "already accomplished" and the "yet to be accomplished" must not be reduced in the way in which the author tends to reduce it. For despite the underlying unity between the two, there is a vast difference between "faith" and "sight"; between a glory already given to the Christ, hidden yet known to faith, and that self-same glory fully manifest; between a world wherein sin and death, though conquered, continue to sting bitterly, and a world in which sin and death shall be no more. It would seem that only a theology not sufficiently biblical or realistic in its interpretation of the history of either Church or world could hold that the transition from the one to the other of these conditions is simply a matter of "process". Realists will continue to rejoice in the biblical hope that is offered for faith in the myth of the Second Coming as "event".

Such a view does not require the belief that the final coming is delayed because certain things must first be fulfilled before God acts to bring this world's history to its close. Dr. Robinson is right in insisting that the unity between the two eschatological "moments" of the first and second coming stands opposed to any such idea. But the idea of "process" on which he relies to assert that unity seems to lose sight of the fact that the time (*chronos*) of the end (*finis*) lies simply in the freedom of God.

WILLIAM O. FENNELL.

THE CHRISTIAN SCHOLAR IN THE AGE OF THE REFORMATION, by E. Harris Harbison. Scribner's, New York, 1956. Pp. xii, 178. \$ 3.00.

The core of this volume, by a Professor of History at Princeton University, is three chapters on Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin. The problems associated with the work of those Reformation scholars in the translation and interpretation of the Scriptures are acutely and suggestively analysed, largely by way of discussion of the different attitudes of the three individuals. Erasmus did not share the view of the theologians that interpretation depends on the influence of the Holy Spirit and not upon knowledge of the original languages of the

Bible. Luther, again, in spite of his admiration for Erasmus, could not help being critical of the latter's philological approach to his texts. To the German Reformer, something more than grammar, learning, and ingenuity was necessary, for the Bible, he maintained, could not be mastered by study or talent alone : "Unless a man be born again", Luther might have said, "he can in no way enter into the kingdom of Christian scholarship". It is impossible not to share Dr. Harbison's evident admiration for Luther's approach and for the translation which it produced. Calvin, the third scholar, represents something like an intermediate position between Erasmus and Luther : "the critical and historical approach to Scripture of Erasmus could coexist with the theological approach of Luther... Calvin would seem to have struck a remarkable balance between personal concern and the feeling for objectively verifiable truth."

But Dr. Harbison suggests far wider issues than can be adequately illustrated in the careers of those three leading figures of the Reformation period. His theme is the grand one of "scholarship as a Christian calling"; he is concerned with the question whether a Christian can be a scholar without spiritual loss; his answer is that learning and devotion can join hands, and no Christian will dispute his conclusion that "so long as Christians believe that God became man, the philologist, the archaeologist, and the historian will continue to occupy an important place in Christian scholarship". But there are many aspects of this wider theme on which one would gladly have heard more, and the scholars Dr. Harbison has selected do all too little to illustrate it. In his first and second chapters he deals with Jerome, Augustine, Abelard, Aquinas, Petrarch, Lorenzo Valla, Pico della Mirandola, and Colet, but nearly all of those were, like Erasmus, Luther, and Calvin, concerned directly with theology and with the translation and interpretation of the Scriptures.

Only with Petrarch, Valla, and Pico is there an opportunity to discuss the central questions of tension and integration in the individual Christian whose scholarship is neither theological nor biblical. Of Petrarch we are told that "all his life he sought some satisfying moral justification of the work he loved — in vain", and he is described as "a badly integrated personality". Of Valla, whose work was historical and textual criticism, it is said that he was not himself aware of any tension, and "we will never be able to fathom the combination of worldly motives, disinterested love of truth, and Christian aims, that inspired his work". Pico, again, essentially a philosopher, "was no more able than Petrarch or Valla to attain any clear sense of calling as a Christian scholar". There is little comfort

here for the philologist, archaeologist, or historian who seeks to integrate his own life and personality as a Christian and a scholar.

A clue which might be worth following up is suggested by one of Dr. Harbison's remarks about Luther: "In the doctorate the Church had imposed upon him the duty of expounding the Scriptures, not only in Wittenberg but to all Christendom." One is tempted to ask, Who are the "teachers" of I Corinthians 12: 28, and Ephesians 4: 11? And why have they not had a place in Christian history comparable to that of the other orders of the ministry? The Presbyterians used to be clear enough on the theory: according to the Scottish Second Book of Discipline, the office of "doctor" was one of the ordinary functions or offices in the kirk of God, and according to the Westminster Form of Church Government the teacher is an "ordinary and perpetual" officer appointed by Christ for the edification of his Church; but the theory seems never to have been put into practice in a Presbyterian or any other church.

GORDON DONALDSON.